

**UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE**  
**School of Management**  
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**Academic Leaders' Views of the Role of Organizational Culture in Implementing  
Management Innovation: The Case of Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia**

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## ABSTRACT

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Organizational culture (OC) is one of the key elements to the success of innovations in universities. The main challenge in universities is, however, building a culture that embraces and sustains innovations. Taking selected dimensions of OC as a guiding framework and qualitative case study as a research design, this study tries to understand academic leaders' conception of OC, and its role on the implementation of management innovation (BPR). Data collected using interview from purposefully selected academic leaders and relevant documents are thematically analyzed. The results reveal lack of common understanding of OC among leaders. Though all leaders unanimously agree that OC is very decisive for organizational success, they agree neither in its definition nor what elements it constitutes in their university context. The study shows that leadership as a dimension of OC has been playing marginal role. Leaders report presence of poor understanding of innovation, low commitment and sense of ownership, disconnection between middle and top level leaders, uncertainty and lack of follow-up of implementation, and reporting for conformity. In addition, presence of poor interpersonal relationships, lack of systematic handling of conflicts, low degree of risk taking behavior and flexibility are reported. All academic leaders have gloomy picture of the university's core values as they are not intentionally translated into practice. A common view held amongst leaders is that there is clash between old and desired culture, and less effort has been made to reconcile new managerial values with traditional ones which later pose difficulty to live up to the underlying principles of BPR. The degree of involvement in decision making is reported to be inadequate. Leaders agree that there was inadequate debate and reflection before and during implementation. All agree that OC has been a barrier in the process of implementation. Based on the results, implications for practice are suggested.

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### List of Abbreviations

BDU	Bahir Dar University
BPR	Business Process Re-engineering
BSC	Balanced Score Card
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
HEI	Higher Education Institution
MI	Management Innovation
MoE	Ministry of Education
NPM	New Public Management
OC	Organizational Culture

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Study Background

Recent developments in the HE landscape worldwide have brought about both challenges and opportunities to academics, students and other stakeholders. Increasing forms of accountability, new stakeholder demands, unpredictable environment, internationalization and new economic challenges among others are influencing HE to engage in in-depth reforms (Knight, 2003; Taylor, Hanlon & Yorke, 2013). Such developments have facilitated exchange of ideas and knowledge among HEIs in the world. It is also becoming familiar phenomena nowadays that countries are exchanging new ideas and use knowledge developed somewhere else for the purposes of improving effectiveness and efficiency of services provided by their HEIs. Significant changes have also been observed on the role students have in HE. Universities are often calling their students as “customers”- considering them as equal partners; their voices are heard, and are bringing significant changes in HE arrangements (tuition fees, curriculum organization, etc) (Abeyta, 2013). Universities’ desire to build image, attract talented students and meet new stakeholders’ expectations have also heightened competition (Vardar, 2010). These continued demands from stakeholders at national and international levels coupled with unpredictable environment have put HEIs under pressure to engage in ongoing reforms to become more efficient and effective.

As part of the move to address such demands, NPM<sup>1</sup> ideas are being practiced in HEIs “as innovative approach to responding to changing environments” (Cai, 2014, p. 2). Many HEIs “have attempted, (either voluntarily or under mandate) to adopt new management systems and processes that were originally designed to meet the needs of (presumably) more efficient business or governmental organizations” (Birnbbaum, 2000, p.1). As a result, it has become common experience to see innovations that have been used in industries being practiced in HE context for various purposes. According to Zhu and Engels (2014, p. 136), among such innovations introduced to the HE system in the last decade include: “... strengthening and creation of international cooperation networks, the increase of academic mobility of faculty and students, new management structure, new methods of assessment, accreditation and financing, diversification of courses, programmes and studies, and the application of technology in teaching and learning.”

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<sup>1</sup> NPM refers for the policy to modernize the public sector and render it more effective. The basic idea of NPM is that market-oriented management of the public sector will lead to greater cost-efficiency for governments (Hood, 1991).

Due to such developments, implementation of MI<sup>2</sup> in HE sector nowadays has become a routine activity. Ethiopian HE has also been subject and object to the influences of such changes. Various MIs such as BPR, BSC and Kaizen have been introduced in the last decade.

Despite such efforts of introducing innovations, their implementation in HE is not always successful and at times, as Birnbaum (2000, p.2) noted such innovations become fads<sup>3</sup> and fail to achieve their intended objectives. Other organizational researchers also argue that even if organizations take various measures that facilitate innovation practices such as involving the community in the process, setting up new structures and feedback mechanisms, hiring personnel and providing facilities, innovations implemented may not still be successful (Martins & Terblanche, 2003, p.64). The researcher's personal experience also coincides with Birnbaum's life cycle stages of management fads in HE (Birnbaum, 2000). The case in point is the MIs introduced into Ethiopian HEIs, particularly in the selected case university, in the last decade. At the inception of introduction of those innovations, there were individuals who were very committed and ambitious; the university management was engaged in daily meetings and awareness creation workshops. In other words, various workshops and meetings have been conducted to try to convince the university community that the university is in crisis and needs such innovations to implement and to become competent. Ultimately, many people have been waiting to see the fruits of the promises of the innovations introduced. In general, the practice in the university parallels to Birnbaum's expression as those faculty and college leaders who have shown interest to engage themselves in the reform practices were "applauded for acknowledging the existence of serious problems" (Birnbaum, 2000, p.7). There were also experiences in the case university that some leaders were replaced by others for they were seen as indifferent by the top leadership<sup>4</sup> on the innovation introduced.

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<sup>2</sup> Management innovation is the implementation of a management practice, process, structure, or technique that is new and is intended to improve management practices that brings a difference in the form, quality, or state over time of the management activities in an organization, where the change is a novel or unprecedented departure from the past (Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2006; Birkinshaw, Hamel & Mol, 2008). Business Process Re-engineering that has been in implementation in the case university since 2007/8 is taken as an example of such innovation in this study. Management innovation has also been used by Birnbaum (2000) to refer to Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS), Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB), Management by Objectives (MBO), Strategic Planning, Total Quality Management/Continuous Quality Improvement (TQM/CQI), Business Process Reengineering (BPR) and Benchmarking.

<sup>3</sup> Birnbaum (2000, p.2) generally referred to those organizational innovations that are usually borrowed from other settings (business and industry), and are applied without full consideration of their limitations, presented either as complex or deceptively simple, rely on jargon, and emphasize rational decision making. Such innovations enjoy brief popularity for a time with exaggerated zeal.

<sup>4</sup> The terms *keftegna amerar* (top leaders) and *mekakelegna amerar* (middle level leaders) are adopted from the university. While the top leadership in this study constitutes the vice presidents, middle level leaders include deans, vice deans, quality assurance, registrar and human resource management officers.



Among the innovations introduced to the case university in the last decade, the famous one is BPR. BPR was implemented following a survey<sup>5</sup> conducted by the case university to justify the need for introducing it in 2007/8. Following this, many changes have been made, mainly structural and process reforms. However, after these years of implementation, it is hard to confidently say that the changes promised at the beginning have been achieved to the expected level. The key question to raise is, therefore, is it possible to consider those MIs so far introduced to Ethiopian HE, BPR and BSC<sup>6</sup> for instance, specifically in the case university, as management fads due to observed discrepancies between what is promised and actually implemented? This question might be worth answering though it is beyond the scope of this study. Rather, it is possible to say at this point in time from the researcher's observation and informal discussion with some colleagues that the implementation of those MIs introduced to Ethiopian HE, in this case in the selected university is not satisfactory. Documented (e.g. university and faculty reports) and undocumented (e.g. informal discussions and meetings) evidences in the case university show that there are problems in the implementation of the MI. Though the top leadership attributes such failures to academic and administrative staffs' lack of commitment, knowledge and skills on their profession as well as on the change introduced (BDU, 2012), there are many outside and inside factors that play a role for the failure and success in the implementation of such innovations in HE. One of these factors that play a critical role in implementing innovations in organizations such as HEIs is OC (Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Schein, 1990; Tierney, 1988; Zhu & Engels, 2014).

OC is key to the success of innovations (Seen, Singh & Jayasingam, 2012; Zhu & Engels, 2014). The biggest challenge many organizations face according to Zhu and Engels (2014) is, however, to create a culture that supports innovation. Alike in other organizations, OC is one crucial element of functional decision making in universities (Fralinger, Olson, Pinto-Zipp & DiCorcia,

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<sup>5</sup> The case university has launched a survey by establishing a redesigning team. The team studied for at least a year and has come up with results that justify BPR as an appropriate tool to transform the university. In the final report, it is mentioned that BDU has opted for BPR as a change tool. The report indicated that the university is in intricate problems whose roots are deep and networked. Thus, it needs to envision to be transformed to a better level (BDU final report on BPR, 2007/8, p.5). In fact, though conducting the study was relevant to understand the problems in the university that later helped in restructuring, BPR was chosen by the government, and has been practiced in other public organizations other than HEIs.

<sup>6</sup> BSC is another MI which has been under implementation by public HEIs in Ethiopia. BDU has also been implementing it since 2011/2012. BSC is presumed to enable academic leaders to develop their organizational strategies in line with the vision, define strategic objectives in line with organizational mission and vision, develop strategic plan by integrating various issues, monitor and adjust the implementation of their strategies and to make fundamental changes in them (Kassahun, 2010, p.30). The front page of the five years strategic plan (2011-2016) of BDU indicates the strategic plan is devised based on BSC (BDU, October 2011).

2010). To these scholars, "The university culture is a great tapestry, where the beliefs and practices of trustees, senior administrators, faculty members, campus community members, competitors, and society combine to fundamentally shape the effectiveness of the university" (p. 254). It is also said that organizational change efforts fail as people fail to understand sufficiently the decisive role of culture in organizations (Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Schein, 1990). Such failures are common when universities introduce MIs in an effort to change their systems. This is because the values, norms and beliefs that affect innovation can have either positive or negative role, depending on "how they shape individuals' and groups' behavior" (Martins & Terblanche, 2003, p.65). Moreover, introducing such MIs in universities may sometimes be in conflict with the academic values of a university. It is because universities vary from other institutions in many ways, and their comprehensive understanding remains blurred and governance of such organizations is also challenging (Birnbbaum, 1988). Birnbbaum further mentioned dualism of controls, conventional administrative hierarchy and decisions made under faculty structure, presence of separation between faculty and administrators, presence of conflicting goals within a university and challenge to quantify achievements associated with lack of agreed metric unlike business organizations as main factors that make universities unique compared to other organizations. In universities, hence, trying to prescribe rigid procedures to result in specified outcomes and treating failures in achieving intended objectives as deficiency of management, and implementing corrective measures using better business tools may not be always successful (Clark, 1998). Despite such peculiarities in the organizations and the need for cautious approach to consider whether such MIs introduced will work well in universities' unique settings, Birnbbaum (1988) emphasized the importance of culture in such organizations as follows:

The important thing about colleges and universities is not the choices that administrators are presumed to make but the agreement people reach about the nature of reality. People create organizations as they come over time to agree that certain aspects of the environment are more important and that some kinds of interaction are more sensible than others. These agreements coalesce in institutional cultures that exert profound influence on what people see, the interpretations they make, and how they behave (p.2).

From the above view points, therefore, OC could clearly serve as either a significant enabler of or a significant barrier to innovation practices in HEIs. As mentioned earlier, similar to other countries, many MIs have been introduced to Ethiopian HEIs in the last decade. BPR, BSC and recently Kaizen are, for instance, some of these MIs. BPR, which is the focus of this study, was introduced to public HEIs in Ethiopia aiming at improving the efficiency of services delivered by universities (teaching, research and community services). While the change was initiated by MoE with the notion that HEIs must reengineer in order to improve their effectiveness and efficiency, it was unquestionable that the context of HEIs in Ethiopia has been crying out for change in its teaching and learning culture. This was affirmed in the studies conducted by

universities asserting that many of them are entangled with administrative and academic problems (e.g. BDU, 2007/8; Hawassa University, 2010). Since then, public universities have been implementing the aforementioned MI.

By taking key theories on OC and critically examining academic leaders' views, this study tried to bring an understanding on the academic leaders' conception of OC and its role in implementing MIs (BPR in focus) in Ethiopian HEIs focusing on one public university (BDU) as a case.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

It is understandable that many organizations can benefit from creating and sustaining a culture that encourages and supports innovation. This is possible because elements of an OC that support innovation could be enhanced through different initiatives (Seen, Singh, & Jayasingam, 2012, p.156) particularly when they are specifically identified and understood well (Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Schein, 1990; Tierney, 1988). On the other hand, other OC researchers asserted that unfamiliarity with OC makes organizations' resistance to change extremely difficult to overcome especially when the focus of the change involves changing existing processes, policies and technologies that would seek changes in behavior of employees (Seen, Singh, & Jayasingam, 2012, p.156). This is especially true in universities as there is often academic oligarchy -wherein academics exert collective voices to shape systems- despite differences in levels of anarchism (Clark, 1983, p.140). In addition to such traditions and resistance to implementations of change in universities, MI implementation in such institutions is also affected by numerous factors. This is mainly because such institutions are affected by influential outside factors related to social, economic and political conditions. In addition, they are shaped by strong forces that stem from within the institutions (Tierney, 1988, p.3). One of these internal factors often resulted from the amalgam of inside and outside forces that affect change processes in institutions is, as mentioned above, OC. Thus, enabling OC is needed to create favorable cultural environment that helps innovations get implemented well (Fralinger et al., 2010; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Tierney, 1988; Zhu & Engels, 2014).

Organizational studies on culture and other related terms have shown that the presence of connection or bond among staff within organizations helps to mobilize them easily and achieve the targets they set. For instance, Clark, in his earlier work, affirmed that organizational saga-collective understanding of unique accomplishments in a formally established group- "presents some rational explanation of how certain means led to certain ends, but it also includes affect that turns a formal place into a beloved institution, to which participants may be passionately devoted" (1972, p.178). In this regard, Tierney (1988) is of the opinion that "our lack of understanding about the role of organizational culture in improving management and institutional performance inhibits our ability to address the challenges that face higher education"

(p.4). Conversely, Tierney is asserting that understanding culture helps to resolve possible conflicts and facilitate changes in such institutions.

A number of studies have been made on the relationship between OC and innovation. However, there are only few studies that show its role on organizational innovations (Mohammed & Bardai, 2012). Previous studies on OC have also shown its pivotal role in making or breaking success of innovation including its implementation in HE. Zhu and Engels (2014, p.153) on their study of the impact of organizational cultural variables on instructional innovations in HE demonstrated that “organizational culture is closely linked to educational innovations”. These researchers in their study asserted that “open and supportive organizational culture with clear goals, collaborative spirit and shared vision are pertinent for the implementation of instructional innovations” in HE.

Another study also examined whether there appears to be a relationship between institutional culture and change. The results suggest that at all institutions, there was a relationship that change strategies seem to be successful if they are culturally coherent or aligned. This study also affirmed that institutions that violated their institutional culture during the change process experienced difficulty (Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

Seen, Singh and Jayasingam (2012) on their part, examined the relationship between OC and innovation using Denison OC Model-rooted in research that has already established key traits of OC as major drivers of increased levels of performance in organizations (Denison, 1990), and found out positive relationship between some of the dimensions of the model (creating change and organizational learning) and innovation.

Nevertheless, there is dearth of study specifically conducted on the role of OC in implementing MIs. The aim of this study is then not to see the failure or success of those innovations but to examine the role OC has been playing while implementing these management tools as culture plays a decisive role in making decisions in universities. As far as I know, albeit presence of evidence that shows influence of OC on innovations in general, neither the above studies nor other studies have addressed specifically the role of OC on implementation of MIs. It was also noted that despite the presence of extensive studies related to the role of OC on different outcomes of organizations, its role on innovation is relatively unexplored (Yeşil & Kaya, 2012, p.11). This is also true in Ethiopian context. For instance, published works that can be found in Ethiopian context on OC are studies conducted by Besha, Negash, and Amoroso (2009), and Endawoke (2009). The former study focused on examining the impact of OC on information system implementation success. However, though the study has tried to see the impact of OC on information system implementation, it focused on private and public organizations other than HEIs, and it also conceptually dealt with implementation of information system. Similar to the former study, the study conducted by Endawoke (2009), the effects of OC and other variables on

the satisfaction of employees and customers, focused on regional bureaus and offices. Both studies, however, proved that OC in Ethiopian context as well had significant impact on organizations' attempt to achieve their organizational goals. Moreover, Endawoke (2009, p.56) ascertained that shared assumptions can affect working environment of organizations and he further suggested OC to be given more attention in research to improve quality of services provided by organizations in Ethiopia.

It is also worth noting that the issue of innovation studies in HE in general and MIs in particular are under-researched. After analyzing previous innovation studies, Cai (2014, p.2) contended that innovations in HE are hardly discussed in the literature and echoed the criticism that researchers are not giving proper attention. In similar vein, Birkinshaw, Hamel and Mol (2008, p. 825), also found out that MI is "relatively under-researched form of innovation and particularly the processes through which it occurs". Similar to the issue of OC, there are very few studies on MIs in Ethiopian HE context (e.g. Kassahun, 2010; Menberu, 2013; Sibhato & Singh, 2012). Kassahun (2010) discussed the ways of adapting and adopting BSC, another innovation tool introduced to Ethiopian HEIs following BPR. It was a meta-analysis of literature aimed at outlining an academic score card that guide as a framework for measuring HEIs' performance. On the other hand, Menbru (2013) in his research, the ups and downs of BPR in the case university of this research and another public organization, found out that BPR design was good in the university but the main failure was lack of wide range of planning and proper implementation. Among the major problems identified in this study include: "leadership commitment and continuity, alignment of organizational objectives to lower-level units, and understanding of employee intentions or resistances, and translating nominal responsibility into practical accountability" (p.95). The study also pointed out problems such as failure to institutionalize new systems; lack of monitoring and reviewing; and presence of insufficient incentive structure as barriers to implementation of BPR. Sibhato and Singh (2012) also evaluated BPR implementation in two public HEIs, Mekelle and Aksum Universities. In their study, the factors that hinder its implementation were identified and include: lack of staff training, false report to outsiders that hide actual progress of implementation, frustration with slow result on behalf of the top management and lack of top management determination and enthusiasm. They also pointed out that despite the two universities had well articulated strategic documents, they were not communicated well and were unable to make staff to have good understanding and change their mind set. The study, however, did not reveal how OC, or "mind set" in their study, is playing a role in the implementation of the process.

As can be seen above, the studies have targeted MIs introduced on Ethiopian HE in the last decade; however, none of these studies have specifically addressed the role of OC in implementing such innovations. Thus, one of the reasons for conducting this research is that the issue of OC does not seem to have got appropriate attention and place in the discourse of HE in Ethiopia, i.e. it is under-researched. Second, there is strong move by the government in

introducing MIs into HEIs; and this needs careful understanding. Additional reason to conduct this research emanates from the researcher's curiosity to know its role in the implementation of MIs so that academic leaders could be aware of it and design appropriate strategies for successful implementations of innovations in their particular cultural context. Though it is selected as a focus of this study for those mentioned reasons, it should be noted, however, that OC is not the only issue that influences implementation of MIs in HEIs. OC as some scholars argue is "one of the many issues that make up the puzzle of public sector organizations" (Jung et al., 2009, p. 1094) that cannot offer solutions to all organizational problems, and one should not assume that "an understanding of organizational culture will solve all institutional dilemmas" (Tierney, 1988, p.17).

### **1.3 Research Questions**

#### **1.3.1 General research question**

What is the role of organizational culture on management innovation practices in Ethiopian higher education?

#### **1.3.2 Specific research questions**

- How do academic leaders at Bahir Dar University define organizational culture?
- How do academic leaders at Bahir Dar University view the role of organizational culture in implementing management innovation (in this case Business Process Re-engineering)?

### **1.4 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to understand the role of OC on the implementation of MI specifically on BPR. In addition, this study attempted to understand academic leaders' conception of OC.

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

Understanding OC is imperative to the study of institutional transformation and to create an environment that supports transformation thereby attain needed outcomes of innovation (Zhu & Engels, 2014, p.141). Hence, the results of the study may be used by academic leaders at BDU to gain a better insight on how OC plays a role in their effort to implement BPR. It may help them adjust the existing culture with the desired culture for implementing such innovations. Specifically, understanding the role of OC is vital for academic leaders at BDU to take appropriate actions for effective implementation of other similar MIs. Though this research has no purpose of generalizations for it is qualitative case study focusing only on one institution,

other academic leaders who have similar experience may also use the results to better understand the role of OC in their context in implementing similar MIs.

### **1.6 Scope of the study**

The study is physically delimited to one public university in Ethiopia, BDU. It is conceptually limited to understanding academic leaders' conceptualization of OC and their views on its role in implementing MI. Selected dimension of OC from literature were used to see its role in implementing BPR. This study focused on implementation of MI taking BPR as a basis for discussion. The focus of the study is limited to implementation because "this is the level at which observable changes take place... and the management innovation process can be witnessed" (Birkinshaw, Hamel & Mol, 2008, p.828).

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Conceptualization of organizational culture and Innovation**

#### **2.1.1 Organizational Culture**

Scholars in the area of education seem to agree that our conceptualization of concepts have direct or indirect effect on our practices (Magrini, 2009). Particularly, this is true in education where we have fluid nature of concepts partly due to diverse philosophical perspectives. Thus, reviewing previous definitions of OC in this study would hence enhance clarity and understanding of the concept. In addition, doing so enables to clearly delineate its boundaries, if it in fact is also possible. Thus, attempt has been made under this section to see how OC is conceived by educators in the area.

Many scholars in organizational studies agree that despite the mounting interest in OC among behavioral scientists and practitioners, there is no strong agreement about a definition of the term (Deshpande & Webster, 1989, p.4). Thus, OC has been defined differently by many scholars (e.g. Allee, 2000; Davies, Nutley & Mannion, 2000; Deshpande & Webster, 1989; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Schein, 1990). However, the reason for variations in the definition of the terms is subject to debate. While some scholars maintain to the idea that the term is “amorphous” in its nature, some disagree with this idea saying that such conclusions are wrong and attribute the variations to the existence of varied theoretical bases of the concept (Deshpande & Webster, 1989, p.4).

In the variety of culture research conducted in the last decades in organizational research, various definitions of OC are found in the literature and most of these definitions are related to some form of shared meaning, interpretations, values and norms (Riter, 1994, p. 36). To Scott, Mannion, Davies & Marshall (2003), OC “denotes a wide range of social phenomena, including an organization's customary dress, language, behavior, beliefs, values, assumptions, symbols of status and authority, myths, ceremonies and rituals, and modes of deference and subversion; all of which help to define an organization's character and norms” (p.925). On the other hand, Allee (2000) understood OC as organizational values and viewpoints toward learning and knowledge transformation. To this scholar, OC is very decisive for any type of organizational success especially if the organization wants to bring any institutional change and in fact exist. Similarly, Schein (1999 in Zhu & Engels, 2014, p. 137) defined it as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions which is developed over time as people in the organization learn to deal with problems of external adaptation and internal integration”. OC is also defined as shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes and norms in organizations (Kilmann et al., 1985 in Lund, 2003, p.220). Serrat (2009) on the other hand described OC as a term that “comprises the attitudes, experiences, beliefs, and values of the organization, acquired



through social learning, that control the way individuals and groups in the organization interact with one another and with parties outside it” (p.1).

Despite such attempts to define the term, a usable definition appropriate to HE has remained vague (Tierney, 1988, p.6). Tierney argued that if we are to enable administrators and policy makers to implement effective strategies within their own cultures, then we must first understand the structure and components of OC. To Tierney (1988),

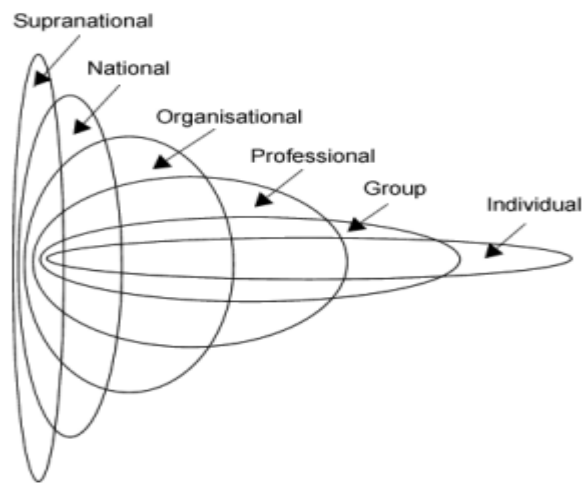
Organizational culture exists, then, in part through the actors' interpretation of historical and symbolic forms. The culture of an organization is grounded in the shared assumptions of individuals participating in the organization. Often taken for granted by the actors themselves, these assumptions can be identified through stories, special language, norms, institutional ideology, and attitudes that emerge from individual and organizational behavior (p.4).

To this scholar, analysis of OC in universities entails understanding actors' interpretations in addition to looking into the structure, rules and regulations that govern the interconnected web, university as an organization in this case.

Similar to other social science concepts and as culture specifically is value-laden, “little agreement exists over a precise definition of OC, how it should be observed or measured, or how different methodologies can be used to inform routine administration or organizational change” (Scott, Mannion, Davies & Marshall, 2003, p.925). Yet, it is possible to deduce from the above definitions that there are similarities across the definitions despite the differences that exist. For instance, values, norms and shared assumptions are commonly repeated phrases in many of the definitions.

While on the one hand organizational culture can be fragmented into various subcultures, as it is also shared among groups and individuals, it needs to be remembered that OC itself is a subculture within a larger set of supracultures (Jung et al., 2007). A meta-analysis of existing literature on subcultures, by Jung et al. (2007), shows that subcultures ranging from supra to individual levels exist and they influence each other. Jung et al. argue that any research on investigation of culture needs to identify which level of culture is to be studied.

**Figure 1.** Interrelated Levels of Culture



**Source:** Karahanna, Evaristo et al. (2005) in Jung et al. (2007, p. 46)

On the other hand, Schein (1990, p.111) understood culture as comprising three levels:

- (i) *Behaviors and artifacts*: this is the most manifest level of culture, consisting of the constructed physical and social environment of an organization, e.g. physical space, mottos, artistic productions and overt behaviors of members.
- (ii) *Values*: being less visible than are behaviors and artifacts, the constituents of this level of culture provide the underlying meanings and interrelations by which the patterns of behaviors and artifacts may be deciphered.
- (iii) *Basic assumptions*: these represent an unconscious level of culture, at which the underlying values have, over a period of time, been transformed and are taken for granted as an organizationally acceptable way of perceiving the world. By this definition, basic assumptions are also the most difficult to relearn and change.

Thus, as can be seen on the diagram above and from Schein's three levels, cultural influences may occur at different levels and often these levels are interconnected. That is, from figure 1, "cultural influences occur at many levels, within the department and the institution, as well as at the system and state level. Because these cultures can vary dramatically, a central goal of understanding organizational culture is to minimize the occurrence and consequences of cultural conflict and help foster the development of shared goals", Tierney (1988, p.5) affirms.

Despite such variations in definitions, however, many organizational researchers agree that the focus on understanding OC should be on the deeply seated values and beliefs that are shared by personnel in organization as they have more influence on organizational decision making process than that of the visible ones (Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Riter, 1994).

Admitting to such lack of strong agreement on the definition of OC, Deshpande & Webster (1989, p.4) offered a definition of OC that is used as an operational definition in this study. They defined it as “the pattern of shared values and beliefs that help individuals understand organizational functioning and thus provide them norms for behavior in the organization”. To these scholars, “organizational culture is related to the causality that members impute to organizational functioning” (Deshpande & Webster, 1989, p.4). Many scholars have also used this definition to guide their research for it is suitable to understand OC at corporate level (Iweka, 2007; Lunda, 2003). In addition, the reasons for taking this definition is that there are various studies that show the invisible part of culture (values and beliefs) in organization has much influence on organizational change than the visible ones (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). In other words, this study attempts to focus on Schein’s (1990) values and basic assumptions. Secondly, similar definition has been used by Martins and Terblanche (2003) in their quest of building OC that initiates creativity and innovation in organizations. Moreover, there are scholars who argue that culture should refer to the invisible parts of the organization. For instance, taking the characteristics that express culture from Hofstede et al. (1990), and their definition of culture referred as “ways of thinking, values and ideas of things rather than the concrete, objective and more visible part of an organization”, Riter (1994, p. 36) argued that “culture does not refer to social structures and behavior but in contrast to mental phenomena such as how individuals within a particular group think about and value the reality in similar ways and how this thinking and valuing is different from that of people in different groups (occupations, tribes, etc.)”. That is, for Riter, it is that stands behind and guides behavior that is culture rather than the behavior as such. Taking the above definition as a guide, OC in this study is also understood in terms its components or dimensions as described in the conceptual framework below (Chapter three). It is also worth noting that as the dimensions of OC proposed by researchers vary, it was found pertinent to select some components based on their relevance to this study.

### **2.1.2 Innovation and Management Innovation**

Innovation has been defined by various scholars. Scholars, however, argue that due to the presence of many definitions of innovation that are related with dominant paradigms of diverse disciplines, it is difficult to get clear and authoritative definition (Baregheh, Rowley, & Sambrook, 2009, p. 1324). The first and influential definition of innovation was proposed by Schumpeter in 1934. He associated it to economic development and defined it as a new combination of productive resources. His conceptualization included introduction of new products, new production methods, exploration of new markets, conquering of new sources of supply and new ways of organizing business (Baregheh, Rowley, & Sambrook, 2009). Since then, the concept of innovation has evolved significantly. During the 1950s, innovation was considered to be a discrete development resulting from studies carried out by isolated researchers (Hidalgo & Albors, 2008). Nowadays, it is no longer conceived as a specific result of individual actions and involves a problem-solving (Dosi, 1982), interactive (Rosenberg, 1986) and

diversified learning process (Levinthal, 1990) (in Hidalgo & Albors, 2008). Innovation involves different activities aimed at giving value to customers and a positive image to the organizations (Ahmed, 1998). There are also various types of innovation based on their purpose and nature. Innovations can also be classified based on their nature (on the basis of whether they bring forward something new), type (classified as product, service, process or technical) or means (in respect of the balance of technology, ideas, inventions, creativity, and market) (Baregheh, Rowley, & Sambrook, 2009, p.1335). It can also be studied at different levels: industry, firm, or individual (Damanpour, 1996, p. 694). Similarly, other scholars Ettlie and Reza (1992 in Baregheh, Rowley, & Sambrook, 2009, p.1324) classified innovation as new products, materials, new processes, new services, and new organizational forms based on their types. Those organizational innovations are understood as introduction of any new product, process, or system into an organization (Suranvi-Unger, 1994 in Sarros, Cooper & Santora, 2008). Due to such presence of varied perspectives and focus of the innovation type, there are various definitions of innovation. Damanpour (1996) provides a comprehensive definition of innovation which is used by various researchers:

...innovation is conceived as a means of changing an organization, either as a response to changes in the external environment or as a pre-emptive action to influence the environment. Hence, innovation is here broadly defined to encompass a range of types, including new product or service, new process technology, new organization structure or administrative systems, or new plans or program pertaining to organization members (p. 694).

Another wider scope definition of innovation that could encompass the innovations introduced into HE, MI in this case, is defined as “the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization” (Amabalie, 1996, p.1). To this scholar, innovation does not only emanate from creative ideas that originate within the organization but also from ideas that originate elsewhere. Both conceptions hold true for those MIs introduced into HEIs. For instance, as it is true in many countries, many MIs that have been successful in industries or business have also been introduced into Ethiopian public HEIs in the last decade, e.g. BPR, BSC and Kaizen. Hamel (2006) defined MI as “a marked departure from traditional management principles, processes, and practices or a departure from customary organizational forms that significantly alters the way the work of management is performed.” (p. 4). To Hamel, MI changes the work and the way of managers in their organizations. Hence, MI involves the introduction of novelty in an established organization, and as such it represents a particular form of organizational change. In its broadest sense, then, MI can be defined as "a difference in the form, quality, or state over time of the management activities in an organization, where the change is a novel or unprecedented departure from the past" (Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2006 in Birkinshaw, Hamel & Mol, 2008, p. 826). In other words, it is the implementation of a management practice, process, structure, or technique that is new and is intended to improve management practices (Birkinshaw, Hamel &

Mol, 2008). BPR is taken as MI in this study. MI has also been used by Birnbaum (2000, p.3) to refer to many business tools such as Management by Objectives (MBO), Total Quality Management/Continuous Quality Improvement (TQM/CQI), Business Process Reengineering (BPR) and Benchmarking.

## **2.2 Organizational culture studies in higher education**

### **2.2.1 The Need to study organizational culture in higher education**

Similar to other organizations, HEIs also have their own culture that affects their day-to-day activities or operations. Hence, understanding what culture exists in one's organization means having clear picture of what is going on in the organization. This in turn helps leaders, staff (academic and administrative) and students to have a common ground on how the organization works thereby enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. Studies on culture affirm that OC is important to understand how organizations function (Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Riter, 1994; Schein, 1990; Tierney, 1988). Particularly, it affects the development and implementations of strategies, the interaction between leaders and staff, staff relation with customers and "how knowledge is created, shared, maintained and utilized" (Mats, 2002, p. 2). According to Mats, to make the interaction harmonious and effective, and avoid confusion and "intense interpretation and re-interpretation of meanings", a common and often "taken for granted ideas, beliefs and meanings are necessary for continuing organized activity" (p. 2). More specifically, "Studying the cultural dynamics of educational institutions and systems equips us to understand and, hopefully, reduce adversarial relationships." Such studies also "enable us to recognize how those actions and shared goals are most likely to succeed and how they can best be implemented" (Tierney, 1988, p. 5).

In this regard, Tierney suggested the following benefits of OC if studied well for practitioners working in HE. OC helps to:

- Consider real or potential conflicts not in isolation but on the broad canvas of organizational life;
- Recognize structural or operational contradictions that suggest tensions in the organization;
- Implement and evaluate everyday decisions with a keen awareness of their role in and influence upon OC;
- Understand the symbolic dimensions of ostensibly instrumental decisions and actions; and
- Consider why different groups in the organization hold varying perceptions about institutional performance (Tierney, 1988, p. 6).

Moreover, studying culture in academic organizations helps leaders take informed decisions about their organizational activities. Organizational behaviorists argue that understanding culture can help to understand employees' behavior and the organization in general. It is because the cultural knowledge they get from studies of OC provides them with intervention options to take informed decisions (Bess & Dee, 2008). Tierney (1988) is also of the opinion that OC not only solves organizational problems but it also helps to explain what is happening in the organization. Tierney, however, argues that if we fail to recognize the role of OC in improving organizational performance, it then hinders our ability to deal with the predicaments HEIs are facing. Thus, OC deserves closer scrutiny as it enables us to understand the management and performances of organizations including HEIs.

### **2.2.2 Role of organizational culture in organizations implementing management innovations**

According to Deal and Kennedy (1983), there are two key reasons why strong OCs can improve educational productivity. The first is internal. Staffs in educational institutions do not know what is expected of them nor do they understand how their actions are related to their organizations wide efforts. "Under such conditions it is not hard to see what happens to beliefs, standards, motivation, effort, consistency, and other ingredients essential to teaching or learning" (p.15). Hence, strong cultures, exhibiting among which a well-integrated and effective set of specific values, beliefs, and behavior patterns (Dennison, 1984), flexible and risk taking behavior (Riter, 1994) and employees' strong alignment with it (Serrat, 2009), offer internal cohesion that makes it easier for staff to work their activities and contribute positively to their organization. The second reason is external. Educational institutions are often judged by appearance as much as by results. "Internal squabbling, mixed signals, unfavorable stories, and the lack of tangible evidence" (p. 15) make the functioning organizations not get the support of other stakeholders. Thorough shared values, beliefs and a supportive informal network; however, the organization can effectively communicate its identity to external stakeholders and get their support.

On the other hand, OC is a relevant variable that influences both individual and organizational process and outcomes (Ahmed, 1998; Birbeck, 2008; Yeşil & Kaya, 2012). According to organization development practitioners, being innovative demands not only to be creative but also to put into practice those creative ideas. Yet, successful implementation of creative ideas requires "a certain set of behaviors, norms and values which differ from merely producing creative ideas" (Seen, Singh, & Jayasingam, 2012, p.149). In other words, "generation of creative ideas alone does little for the organization, what is highly important is the effective implementation of those creative ideas" (Flynn & Chatman, 2001 in Seen, Singh, & Jayasingam, 2012, 149). In this regard, culture guides the integration of staff in organizations in and outside of the organization and facilitates implementations of innovation. In fact, though culture is considered as one of the "premier competitive advantage of high-performance organizations", it

is very challenging to change as “it outlives founders, leaders, managers, products, services, and well-nigh the rest” (Serrat, 2009, P.1)

Various studies have shown that OC has a role of in influencing process operations within organizations (Birbeck, 2008). Tierney (1988, p.6) asserted that, "the understanding of culture will thus aid administrators in spotting and resolving potential conflicts and in managing change more effectively and efficiently". Seen from HE context, to understand the factors underlying resistance to change attempts is very challenging and the level to which innovations are sustained is far more challenging. Hence, critical understanding of OC is mandatory to understand "the collective thought processes informing that behavior at both conscious and unconscious levels" (Scott, Mannion, Davies & Marshall, 2003). Essentially, to maneuver the ongoing process and address the needs of their followers in organizations, leaders must have deep understanding of OC (Tierney, 1988) as the values, norms and beliefs can facilitate or hinder innovation implementation depending on their influence on the people's behavior (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). Martins and Terblanche (2003) asserted that if the basic elements of OC such as shared values, beliefs and behaviors are taken as relevant components of an organization it can impact innovation practices of that particular organization. It influences through the process of socialization where organizational members learn the norms and values of the organization and then members act in accordance to the norms and values. These values directly or indirectly influence them about the innovation practice.

Furnhan and Gurnter (1993 in Martins & Terblanche, 2003, p. 65) summarize the functions of OC as internal integration and coordination, cf. Shein's (1985a) external adaptation and internal integration. Internal integration can be described as the socializing of new members in the organization, creating the boundaries of the organization, the feeling of identity among personnel and commitment to the organization. The coordinating function refers to creating a competitive edge, making sense of the environment in terms of acceptable behavior and social system stability that is considered as the social glue that binds the organization together. Zhu and Engels (2014, p.139) on their part asserted that an innovative, open and supportive OC with clear goals, collaborative spirit and shared vision is pertinent for the implementation of instructional innovations. Similarly OC can play a role in forming an integral part of general functioning of an organization. It provides shared values that ensure that everyone in the organization is on the same track (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). However, there are also times where OC can undermine innovation in organizations. Many educators in the area of OC concur to the idea that “When culture works against you, it is nearly impossible to get anything done” (Deal and Kennedy, 1983, p. 14), i.e. if OC is poorly managed and MIs are not in alignment with the existing OC, it may lead to failure. In other words, OC “is said to be strong where employees respond to stimuli because of their alignment with it. Conversely, it is said to be weak where there is little alignment, and control is exercised with administrative orders” (Serrat, 2009, P.2)

In this regard, Ettlie (1998 in Birbeck, 2008, p.6) observed that OC may be an obstacle to implementation success. Tierney (1988, p.4) made an important remark that people tempt to understand OC when challenges are rising and this lack of understanding about its role turns out to hinder the capacity of HEIs to mitigate the challenges they face. Thus, critical scrutiny of and study on the role OC has in HEIs helps academic leaders to make it part of their discourse that in turn helps them implement MIs effectively.

## **2.3 Ethiopian higher education and Business Process Re-engineering at Bahir Dar University**

### **2.3.1 Ethiopian higher education in brief**

Ethiopia is a country with a population of approximately 96.5 million (World Population Review, 2014) that makes it the 2<sup>nd</sup> populous country in Africa. It is a country which has diversified population where more than 80 ethnic groups with their own distinct languages and culture live together. These social and cultural foundations are believed to be among the significant factors that affected the philosophy of education in the country. The history of education system in Ethiopia dates back to the sixth century B.C., when the Sabian alphabet was used in the Axumite kingdom (Yalew, 1976 in Saint, 2004). Paradoxically, albeit long history in education, modern education in Ethiopia is a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon initiated with the establishment of the current Addis Ababa University in 1950s. Even after this formation, expansion of HEIs was not given much attention until the incumbent government came to power in 1991.

As mentioned, many believe that Ethiopian HE started in the 1950s with the advent of a Western type of colleges and universities (Asgedom, 2005). As it is true for many countries, political changes have been directly affecting the education system of the country where HE was subject to this influence in its governance, structure and management. For instance, prior to the socialist political system, the monarchical system had its own way of looking into the then one university in terms of defining governance and purpose of HE in society in general. On the other hand, the socialist Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 marked a new form of governance with new attitude that brought about a change in the system (Negash, 1996).

Since the current government, FDRE, took power in 1991, both public and private HEIs have drastically increased in number. In terms of expansion, though Ethiopia is lagging behind other African nations, a remarkable action has been taken in the last decade in the development of HE (Araia, 2013). In this regard, huge expansion in HE has been observed. Though relatively young, there are currently 33 public universities. Araia (2013) mentioned:



Between the early 1950s and the mid-1980s, Ethiopia had only two universities and no graduate studies had begun in earnest till 1979. During the reign of the Derg, sometime in 1984 Alemaya College of Agriculture, which was part of Addis Ababa University, was elevated to a university, and between the mid 1990s and the turn of the century several universities such as Mekelle, Bahir Dar, Debu, Jimma as well as colleges such as Ambo and the Civil Service College, Addis Ababa College of Commerce were added (p. 1).

In addition to the expansion in public institutions, private provision of HE and training in Ethiopia started in early 2000 and now there are a number of accredited institutions (MoE, 2013). Despite such expansion, however, HE in Ethiopia is still facing problems of quality, equity, and relevance of academic programs and research (MoE, 2005/2010; Yizengaw, 2005).

In the last two decades, huge reform agenda were introduced into the HE at both system and institution levels. Education and training policy of education that has set out direction to changes in education system and HE in particular came to effect in 1994. The policy has criticized the earlier policies of education in the country for their lack of relevance, quality, accessibility and equity in all levels of education from kindergarten to HE (MoE, 1994, p.2). It also mentions that the previous policies lacked to indicate future direction. The policy aims to focus on “the development of problem- solving capacity and culture in the content of education, curriculum structure and approach, focusing on the acquisition of scientific knowledge and practicum” (MoE, 1994, p.4). To realize this bold aim, subsequent Education Sector Development Programs (ESDP I, II, III, and IV) were envisaged and came to effect. Since then various efforts were made and significant achievements have been gained in the HE sector.

HEP was envisaged in 2003 (No. 351/2003) and later revised in 2009 (No. 650/2009) that paved ways for the expansion and governance of HE. As part of the reform process in the Ethiopian HE, NPM issues, which are particular interest to this study, were introduced. For instance, in the last decade, BPR, BSC and Kaizen were introduced into public HEIs. MoE has shown strong commitment in pushing universities to introduce change into their system in spite of resistance often related to external and institutional factors. Though huge expansions of universities and strong commitment from the government to support universities to enhance their capacity that has led to the introduction of MIs is undergoing, there is scanty research evidence that portray how these MIs are being implemented.

### **2.3.2 Business Process Re-engineering at Bahir Dar University**

Since 1991/92, the Ethiopian government has been reforming the public sector to effectively implement national policies and strategies so as to render efficient services. To achieve these, the government has chosen BPR to tackle and radically transform inefficient public organizations

(Debela & Hagos, 2011, p. 5). BPR was chosen as it involves not only change but also dramatic change. It comprises whole scale change in structures and processes. Hammer and Champy (1993, p. 32) defined BPR as “the fundamental rethinking and radical design of business processes to achieve dramatic improvement in critical measures of performance such as cost, quality service and speed.” Due to the need to transform the inefficient public sectors, the Ethiopian government has considered BPR as a cure for transforming the deep-rooted inefficiency of public organizations including HEIs. Alike other public organizations in Ethiopia, the government has envisaged direction to introduce BPR into HEIs. Prior to introducing BPR, public HEIs in Ethiopia were studying their context to minimize the tendency of one-size-fits-all approach, and to reengineer in their own way adhering to the basic principles of BPR. In fact BPR was already chosen tool and the purpose of the surveys were to justify the need for BPR and design their own processes and structures. Following this, various survey reports have been published by universities that support the need for BPR in universities (e.g. BDU, 2007/8; Hawassa University, 2010).

In the time where BPR was envisaged to be introduced into universities in 2007/8, provision of teaching at BDU as well as in other Ethiopian public universities in general was criticized for it was not vibrant to meet the demands of stakeholders (government, industry, students and teachers). As mentioned, comprehensive need assessment survey or SWOT analysis that included both internal and external stakeholders was conducted to justify those claims to introduce BPR as a change tool. The results at BDU showed presence of critical problems in the three major activities (teaching, research and community service) of the university that call for urgent actions.

It was found out that teaching and learning are disintegrated and not supported by healthy assumptions of knowledge and instruction. For instance, it was revealed that academic staff at the time of the survey conducted believed knowledge to be constant and known. The research conducted in the university was haphazard that did not support team work. Specifically, academic program related problems such as poor program relevance, lack of continuous curriculum follow up, lack of course owner, mere reproduction of knowledge that lacked localization and too much fragmentation of knowledge and skill were identified. On the other hand, instructional delivery related problems such as inflexible program delivery, lack of variety in learning environments and modes of learning and lack of synthesized or coordinated system for knowledge creation and synthesis were other problems. The survey results also showed that these problems have brought about side effects related to student learning assessment such as lack of standardization and lack feedback provision systems (BDU, 2007/8). Based on these results, the university introduced BPR following the survey report to tackle the challenges identified. Re-designing was made in the structure of teaching, research and community service provisions. New roles and responsibilities, and guiding documents were developed. Then, full

implementation of the tool was made at university level. The following were the objectives of re-designing the teaching learning process in the university:

- Introduce efficient and customer oriented ways of carrying out various administrative functions of the teaching learning process such as registration, recording, scheduling, and graduation.
- Put in place educational practices, supported by information technology, that is closely related with add on values on students' learning and 'produce' graduates that yearn for lifelong learning and meet the demands of employers and/or the demands of productive life.
- Institutionalize new ways of learning (to mention some reflexive, expressive, on-line, continuous, independent, reflective, and practical) that are customized to students and higher economies of scale.
- Design mechanisms that create conducive situations for the teaching learning process by reforming the physical classroom organization and other methods that are customized to students.
- Design mechanisms which would help to ensure quality in the programs offered and teaching learning process.
- Design a system which transforms the university to a knowledge enterprise that focuses both on knowledge generation and learning focused educational programs (BDU, 2007/8, p. 6).

Interestingly, the report also mentioned that if the university is to achieve the envisaged objectives, it has to work on changing the then exiting culture that was characterized as "toxic and inefficient". The report asserts "The crux of the matter lies in changing the culture of the University-the way we do things here and the lurking values and assumptions beneath our practice" (p.3). The report repeatedly mentioned OC "as not only determines the way we do things but also may enslave its members to the ethos and norms, delimiting their thought systems and forcing them to relinquish craving for betterment and a new world"(p.3). It then recommended the university to nurture efficient and effective way of doing things that heeds to customers' demands and that could pave ways to educational provision based on principles of lifelong learning.

Despite such attempts by the university to solve the problems using BPR as tool for change and the mentioned promise above to change the culture, current practice is showing that many of the problems promised to be solved during introduction of the tool are not addressed, and even there are indications among staff that the full scale implementation of the tool has failed. It was, for instance, common experience to see the presidents' biannual meetings with academic and administrative staff confined to discussions on the need of the change tool after three years of

implementation. There were also claims from some staff, and personal experiences that show severe resistances from staff and most of the leaders especially the top leadership's reluctance to move forward to implementing the tool. On the other hand, the university, alike other public universities in Ethiopia, has introduced another MI tool called BSC in 2011/12. The purpose of this tool was to complement the previously implemented BPR and enhance the communications among units and staff in the university. In addition, the university has also introduced recently another MI tool called Kaizen. As can be observed from the context of the university, it is open at least in introducing and implementing MIs. Despite the obvious benefits that the university could get from implementing these MIs, there are no studies made as to how the culture of the university is affecting the implementation of MIs. In addition, the demand of BPR for dramatic change vis-à-vis the nature of culture in HEIs as compared to other public organizations needs careful investigation.

## **CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 Organizational Culture theory**

To understand and analyze culture in institutions, use of framework enables to focus on limited but essential elements, and guide the researcher throughout the study. Hence, in this section, it is attempted to briefly present a conceptual framework that guides the present study. In choosing cultural framework, however, Tierney (1988) argued that neither successful nor those unsuccessful institutions may have similar cultures. Hence, it has to be reiterated that reason for developing a cultural framework “is not to presume that all organizations should function similarly, but rather to provide managers and researchers with a schema to diagnose their own organizations” (p. 17).

OC is broadly considered as one of the most important factors in reforming public administration and service provision (Jung et al., 2007, p.1087). As such, a practical need to assess in organizations culture has arisen and many models with diverse dimensions have emerged. For instance, several models have been developed to describe the relationships between phenomena and variables of OC (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). As noted by many researchers and as shown in the aforementioned section, OC has been challenging to define despite agreements on several of its essential elements (norms, perspectives, values, assumptions, and beliefs shared by organizational members) (Cai, 2008, p.213). Considering such challenges of understanding OC, this study attempted to understand it in the dimensions it constitutes. The dimensions, however, are as many as the number of researchers who proposed them. Yet, some similarities exist across the dimensions in the models proposed (e.g. Denison, 1996; Martins, 1987; Tierney, 1988).

Jung et al. (2007, p. 43) also asserted that OC is “far from being conceptualized universally” that led to have diverse dimensions often difficult to study citing two previous reviewed studies on dimensions of OC. Ott (1989) listed 74 elements of OC which have been identified by various authors, and van der Post et al. (1997) identified over 100 dimensions associated with OC. This shows that there exists little consensus on the list of dimensions of OC. Hence, to minimize such challenges, it is useful to cluster the various dimensions relevant to the level of culture under study. Moreover, OC has lent itself to various ways of analysis due to the various dimensions that has been proposed by various researchers. For such reasons, literature shows that there are various dimensions of OC. For instance, characteristics related to or derived from OC: in terms of empowerment, team orientation, capability development, creative change, customer focus and organizational learning (Denison, 1996), or motivation; socialization; quality and leadership; control; and collegiality (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001 in Folch & Ion, 2009).

Ginevičius and Vaitkūnaite (2006, p.208) in their analysis of OC dimensions that influence performance using content analysis and hierarchical structuring method, they have identified twelve dimensions from 25 that have impact on performance of organizations. Their final list consists of the following dimensions: involvement, cooperation (collaboration), transmission of information, learning, care about clients, adaptability, strategic direction, reward and incentive system, system of control, communication, agreement, and coordination and integration. They reported that these dimensions could be used to assess the role of OC on the success of organizations. Yet, it was not clearly pointed out in this study on what success or performance of the organization that a researcher has to focus.

Other studies have also analyzed organizational culture (goal and innovation orientation, participation in decision making, structured and supportive leadership, shared vision, and collaborative relationship) in terms of its relationship with instructional innovation (Zhu & Engels, 2013). Folch and Ion (2009) on their part analyzed OC of universities in two ways and proposed two models to analyze OC in universities: at university level and at department level. These authors remarked that in studying these levels of culture there might be differences in theoretical and methodological approaches for the two investigations. The authors remarked that the two approaches eventually lead the researcher interested to conduct study on one of them “to identify common and divergent features in the two contexts” (Folch & Ion, 2009, p. 143). According to Folch and Ion (2009, p. 144), however, though dealing with both department and university culture is possible to study OC in a wider scope, “The analysis of a university’s organizational culture is important because the university as an organization is interested in the adaptation of its culture to the values and the behavior of its members, so as to maintain a healthy state of mind and foster permanent improvement”. This is also corroborated by Tierney (1988) who contends organizational culture as valuable element to understand quality and leadership in universities and claimed the analysis of cultures as a method of institutional diagnosis. Other scholars also claimed that shared values and beliefs are the soul of culture (Deal & Kennedy, 1983) and need deliberation. Hence, it appears feasible at this point that when studying organizational culture it could be studied in various ways as it has been approached by various researchers differently and it is then noteworthy to identify the level in which ones study is focusing. This study is then targeting the university culture or institutional culture and the dimensions chosen to guide are of on this assumption.

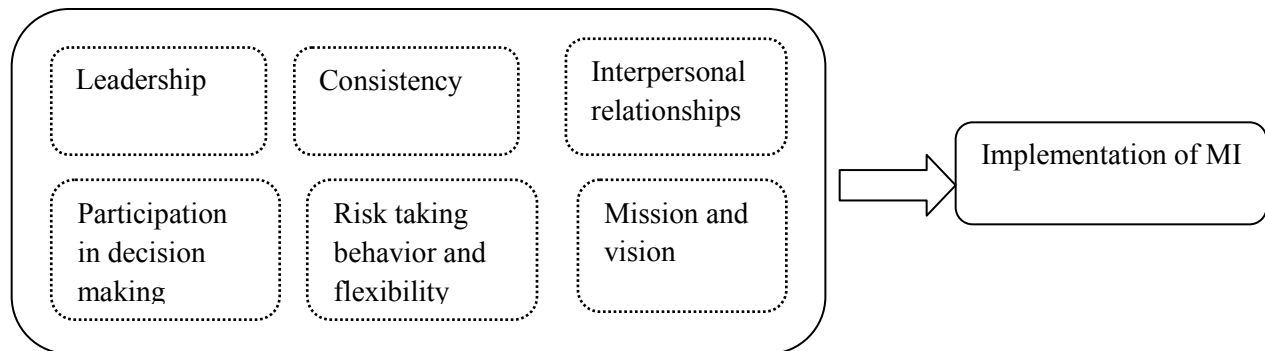
The conceptual framework for this study is then developed considering such variations. In so doing, the following three steps adapted from Ginevičius and Vaitkūnaite (2006, p. 203) were followed to select the dimensions. First, attempt was made to review from the sources of literature and dominant models in the study of OC and their dimensions were collected. As it was contended by Ginevičius and Vaitkūnaite (2006), many authors didn’t single out concrete dimensions and the names were given by analyzing the content phenomena described. In this study too, either the names proposed by the sources were maintained or new name is given to the

revised dimension. Second, differently named dimensions were ascribed to one dimension, if after analyzing their content it became clear, that they were similar. In so doing, similar dimensions proposed by different authors were merged and viable dimensions that suit to the context of the study were selected, and finally only those dimensions that are either empirically or theoretically supported to affect the implementation of innovations were selected. Among the commonly used frameworks for studying OC, four models/frameworks were chosen and the dimensions across these models were studied and selected.

The first model is Schein's (1992) OC model. Schein (1992) has provided one of the most prominent conceptualizations of OC. He suggests that culture exists at three levels. The first is at the observable level, which he calls artifacts. The second and third levels exist as inferences about how workers believe and feel, and the assumptions on which those beliefs and feelings are based. He calls these categories values and basic assumptions respectively. Schein breaks down each of these into categories that allow useful diagnosis of college and university cultures. However, Schein's model is criticized for not addressing the active role of assumptions and beliefs in forming and changing OC (Hatch, 1993 in Martins & Terblanche, 2003). Hence, for this study's focus is on values and beliefs it did not use it. One of the frameworks used in this study is Tierney's dimensions of OC (1988, p.8) developed for studying OC which is also said to be comprehensive. This framework constitutes six dimensions: environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy and leadership. Similarly, Martins (1987 in Martins & Terblanche, 2003) developed an OC model based on the ideal organization and the relevance of leadership in creating an ideal OC. This model is based on interaction between sub-systems in organization, survival functions (internal and external systems), and the dimensions of culture (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). According to these authors, this model is considered as comprehensive as it encompasses many aspects of an organization upon which OC can have an influence and vice versa. According to Martins and Terblanche (2003) this model can be employed to see how OC influences innovations in organizations. This model also consists of six dimensions: mission and vision, external environment, means to achieve objectives, image of the organization, management processes, employee needs and objectives, interpersonal relationships and leadership (Martins, 1987/1995 in Martins & Terblanche, 2003, p. 66). Denison (1996) on the other hand, identified six cultural dimensions. These include empowerment, team orientation, capability development, creative change, customer focus and organizational learning. From these frameworks, following the three steps adapted from Ginevičius and Vaitkūnaite (2006), the following conceptual framework with six broad dimensions is developed to see the role of OC on implementation of MIs.

**Figure 2.** Conceptual framework

Organizational Culture



**Source:** Adapted from Denison, 1996; Martins (1987 in Martins & Terblanche, 2003) & Tierney, 1988

In this conceptual framework, the conceptualizations of some of the dimensions mentioned are understood in line with the questions raised by Tierney (1988) in his effort to explain each dimension. In addition, the other dimensions included in the conceptual framework are either merged or considered different, and understood as follows. It should be noted, however, that as some scholars put it, culture is an interconnected web of relationships, and it is quite common to see these dimensions overlapping and connecting with each other (Tierney, 1988). As can be seen from the fig. the lines were made to appear broken for it is very difficult to clearly delineate the boundaries of the dimensions. Now let's see the descriptions of each dimension in the framework.

### 3.1.1 Leadership as a dimension of organizational culture

Organizational leaders are confronted with many multifaceted issues while making decisions on their organizational activities to achieve their missions. Though leaders' may play critical roles, their decision making power may be limited by the level of knowledge, attitude and skills they have. Their understanding of OC among others is very crucial. It is because those leaders who have a good understanding of their OC, and who take it critically, will be able to envisage the outcomes, and are in a position to take action to both likely and unlikely consequences that may occur in their organization (Madu, 2011, p.2).

There are two opposing schools of thought about leaders and culture (Sarros, Cooper & Santora, 2008, p.148). Sarros et al. in their analysis of works of different scholars mentioned that while the functionalist school adheres to the idea that leaders are the architects of culture change "either through substantive, visible actions or through the symbolic roles they play", the



anthropological view on the other hand, challenges “the veracity of leaders’ being able to create culture; that is, leaders are part of culture, not apart from it” (Sarros et al., 2008, p.148). Nevertheless, these scholars’ analysis shows that the functionalist views outweighs in terms of evidence that leaders are have the veracity to shape the organization’s culture and the general environment where their organization operates. One of the reasons is that OC “may have been forged by the founder; it may emerge over time as the organization faces challenges and obstacles; or it may be created deliberately by management” as “it could be improved by organizational learning for change” (Serrat, 2009, p.1).

Though there are debates whether OC is part of leadership or vice versa, many OC researchers have opted for the later. Leadership as one dimension of OC has been discussed by various authors (e.g. Denison, 1996; Martins, 1987, 1995; Tierney, 1988). According to Schein (2004), organizations build stability because of success in performing their major tasks. Assumptions and values become shared by staff and those shared assumptions are transferred to new members of the organization via socialization (Tierney, 1997) including those of the leaders. Once the desired culture is built and shared, it becomes a strong tool to communicate the academic leader’s beliefs and values to staff, especially to new comers. This in turn helps leaders achieve success in their organization by being dependable, in sending clear messages about their priorities, values and beliefs. The way leaders communicate and their personal relationship with other leaders and employees, the role they play in role modeling, support provision, and their implementations of rules and regulations have a bigger influence on the performance of their organizations (Schein, 2004).

According to Deal and Kennedy (1983) effective leaders are symbolic leaders who give considerable attention to very important cultural details. They stated:

Effective [leaders] consider reflecting a few desired values everyday in their speech and behavior; tell about the organization’s exemplary people; set meeting time with their staff to discuss the values and philosophies of their organization; celebrate different parties with their staff and recognize their heroes and heroines; take time for induction of their new staff and prepare retirement party to reinforce values and beliefs in an elder leaving the culture; publicly recognize their teachers who support their students better; organize long sessions so that every staff can discuss the values and beliefs of their organizations (p. 15).

In Deal and Kennedy’s (1983) opinion leaders have also strong role in creating cultural patterns to address staff needs and revising culture that has become inappropriate to the current context. In addition, leaders plan “occasions where people can come to grips with values that need to be re-examined or changed” and “determine how the culture might encourage or undermine educational performance as staff changes rapidly while the culture remains same” (Deal &

Kennedy, 1983, p. 15). In their meta-analysis of earlier studies, Martins and Terblanche (2003) found out that leaders' values and beliefs on free exchange of communication, their commitment and support for innovations, openness to staff concerns and questions, and entertaining diverse views have an influence on innovation practices. That is, those organizations that have such leaders who support the mentioned traits positively have likely success in implementing MIs. Such type of leadership where leaders make a decision to meet the dynamics of the organization is transformational leadership. Bass (1997 in Abbasi and Zamani-Miandashti, 2013) defines transformational leadership as "the process of consciously influencing individuals or groups to make change in current situation and organizational functions as a whole" (p. 508). Such leaders influence their organization by their consistency in their speech and practice, developing awareness of the staff on the core values, mission and vision of the organization and by motivating their staff "to think beyond the personal benefits" (Abbasi & Zamani-Miandashti, 2013). In so doing, leaders must make staff to engage in continuous professional development activities and enhance their understanding of the visions of their university and their respective colleges or faculties. Such practices in turn create shared mental models that create easiness for implementing innovations in universities. Ahmed (1998) also noted that leaders can shape the culture of the organization as they have the power make to priorities and exert efforts to realize these priorities. The staff take the priorities set by what leadership values, and use them to guide their practice. The possible challenge for leaders however is "to make sure that the staff make the right type of attributions, since any mismatches or miscommunication quite easily leads to confusion and chaos" (p.33), Ahmed affirms. The degree of commitment and involvement of leaders has a major influence in making implementation of innovation successful. Particularly, the extent to which leadership shows real commitment and leads by example and showing this commitment in practice rather than "just empty exhortation" is a major factor (Ahmed, 1998). This, however, demands "walk the talk" and assertion of the mission and vision of the organization and making the staff get inspired by the organization's values and work environment.

Likewise, leaders in HEIs are supposed to improve their organizations, deliver shared governance, respect norms and values of their organizations, and communicate effectively with stakeholders in and outside of their organization (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2006). According to this report, leadership in HE is presumed to be team oriented where all organizational staff are active in the process of making decision and serve as a medium for organizational changes that support mutual understanding and interest of members of organization. Similarly, Birnbaum (1988), mentioning the existence of patterns in organizational life noted the importance of leaders in identifying those patterns. He stated, "Ineffective administrators fail to see these patterns and often act foolishly. Effective administrators recognize existing patterns and act sensibly. The most creative administrators are those who not only perceive complex patterns and relationships but also discover or invent new patterns where others find only confusion" (pp. xiv-xv)

Among the various challenges HEIs are facing today is however the need to revitalize the traditional leadership in theory and practice. A new leadership paradigm has emerged with the emergence of new managerialism in HE that demand fundamental change of existing culture established for long time. This type of new leadership, as mentioned above, is called transformational. It is “A watchword for a new leadership paradigm that emerged to meet the demands of the emergent global epoch is transformation” (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2006, p. 36). Unlike other types of leadership, it requires planned effort of leaders and other organizational members to work together to radically transform their institution “to respond and adapt to environmental change” (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2006). Avolio, Waldman, and Yammarino (1991 in ASHE Higher Education Report, 2006, p. 36) stated the need for such type of leadership as:

‘In a continually changing environment, the long range success of an organization depends on the ability of leadership at all levels to develop, stimulate and inspire followers. Transformational leaders-who offer individualized consideration, spark intellectual stimulation, provide inspirational motivation and engender idealized influence- should be understood and then developed’ (p. 36).

According to Marquardt (1996 in Abbasi and Zamani-Miandashti, 2013, p. 508) a transformational leader is “a person who creates a shared vision, makes and coordinates multifunctional teams, encourages innovation and risky operations, performs the best ideas in the organization, engage people in systemic thinking and inspire learning and action”. According to Abbasi and Zamani-Miandashti (2013) transformational leadership “has substantial role in organizational learning process, and the employees expect their managers to be transformational leaders” (p.515). To these scholars, leaders should engage in inspiring students, academic and administrative staff “to understand and realize internal and external complexities through creation and acquisition of new knowledge”. Leaders need to have defined and clear vision and should be shared by staff in their organizations. Leaders need to support their staff in translating the vision and mission of their organizations into practice in their day-to-day activities (Abbasi & Zamani-Miandashti, 2013, p.515). These scholars further argued that faculty leaders should manage OC consciously. They recommended a transparent, comprehensive and influential attitude toward culture and make necessary changes in the current culture to support innovation implementation. Many agree that transformational leadership is the type of leadership appropriate for OC change, as it needs huge energy and commitment. In this regard, leaders, particularly top leaders, have a great role in selecting the desired culture that positively influences the implementation of innovations (Sarros et al., 2008, p.148). Other researchers also cautioned that unlike to transformational leadership, other leadership types such as authoritarian forms of leadership and even management-by-exception leadership hinder learning and in turn become barrier for innovations to bear fruit. In authoritarian leadership, for instance, leaders depend on warnings and fear, and staff in advance tries to avoid bringing new ideas and

acknowledge institutional procedures for granted. In addition to taking the benefits of leadership type that aligns with innovation practices into consideration, leaders' way of treating the dimensions of OC is essential. Studies show that despite clear influence of OC on organizational activities and performances, its elements are, however, often expressed as "slogans, wishful thinking and fantasies rather than as a way of gaining a deeper understanding of organizational life" (Riter, 1994, p. 35), and become superficial to impact organizational practice. Riter further noted:

It is very common among managers and others to characterize the organization as unique and special but then to characterize it in simple and standardized terms such as 'We are customer- [or market-] oriented'; 'We are quality leaders'; 'We treat employees with respect and see them as our most valuable asset'; 'We provide excellent service'; 'We are in favour of change'; and 'We support sustainable development.' These are vague and sweeping expressions. Sometimes they mean something; often they don't (Riter, 1994, p. 35).

As to whether culture could be managed and changed by leaders in organizations, Riter (1994, p. 41), summarized there different views based on the conceptions we have about OC itself. Its challenge increases when we go from very narrow conceptualization of culture as a behavior manifested or existing rules and regulations to deep seated beliefs and values which are invisible and often difficult to manage and change. The influence of the later on innovation practices is however very high. As to whether leaders can have a strong, systematic, intended influence on the values and beliefs of their staff and their ability to change the existing culture, there are different positions of OC theorists. Riter (1994, p. 41) has identified from literature that there are three positions.

- i) One is that OC, at least under certain conditions and with the use of sufficient skills and resources, can be changed by top management.
- ii) A second is that this is very difficult. As indicated above, there is a multitude of various values and meaning- influencing groups, and 'depth' structures are not easily accessible for influencing. People do not respond predictably to efforts to change their orientations. Still, change takes place and management is one resourceful group exercising influence. One could therefore assume that top leaders exercise a moderate influence on some values and meanings under certain circumstances.
- iii) A third view emphasizes that culture is beyond control. How people create meaning in their work experiences is related to local culture, contingent upon educational background, work tasks, group belonging and interpersonal interactions, etc. Ogbonna and Wilkinson (2003 in Riter, 1994, p.41) mentioned that in this third view top

management may have limited impact and their roles are limited to “caretaker and nurturer images”.

Despite such variations of views, studies of organizational cultural change assert that cultural change is challenging and demanding (Riter, 1994, p. 49), and leaders’ roles in managing and changing OC cannot be underestimated. Many researchers affirmed the role of leadership on managing and changing OC (Martin, 2002; Schein, 1992; Tierney, 1988). Hence, it is quite pertinent for leaders to give attention to the way things are done in practice. Moreover, leaders have a major role in ensuring staffs’ understanding and consistency of implementation of the mission, vision, Strategy and core values of the organization. Furthermore, it is also leaders’ role to create an environment that allows participation of staff in decision making process, smooth interpersonal relationships among staff and themselves, and risk taking capacity and flexible structure that can endure the demands of the innovation tool.

### **3.1.2 Mission and vision as dimensions of organizational culture**

Mission and vision as dimensions of OC have a strong impact in the implementation of innovations in organizations. It is noted by many researchers that the way the mission is defined, the presence of agreement in its definition and whether the mission is playing a role in guiding organizational decision making is critical for the success of organizations (Tierney, 1988). This is especially true while organizations do their day-to-day activities or more specifically in implementing MIs. Mission as dimension of OC for Denison (1996) comprising the strategic direction and intent, goals and objectives and vision of an organization, refers to an organization’s purpose and direction, and reflects a focus external to the organization and on stability. Some scholars, however, argue that clear mission may not guarantee effectiveness. In this regard, Birnbaum (1988) stated:

Although some have suggested that higher education institutions could be managed more effectively if their missions were clarified, this has proved to be impossible to do in larger and more complex organizations. A more sensible suggestion might be to redefine management so that it can function usefully within a context of conflicting objectives. Given the differences in the clarity of goals, we should not be too surprised to find that effective management in colleges and universities would differ from that seen in business firms (p.12).

Moreover, designing proper mission and vision and strategy *per se* does not bring the planned objectives into reality. One of the reasons is that the way they are done is also equally pertinent if not more. In this regard, OC when constituting these dimensions “plays a role in filling the gap between what is formally announced and what actually takes place” (Martins & Terblanche,

2003, p.65). These scholars also argue that mission as a dimension of OC helps to keep the strategy set out for implementation on track.

### **3.1.3 Interpersonal relationships**

Interpersonal relationships focus on the relationship between managers and personnel and on the management of conflict to make people successful, which is more or less similar with Tierney's socialization (Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Tierney, 1988). Interpersonal relationship as a dimension of OC focuses on the relationship between managers and personnel, and on the management of conflicts (Martins, 1987, 1995). Understanding of culture in this regard helps to carefully manage and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships among employees in organizations as it supports to identify and resolve potential conflicts. It is because OC in the process of implementation of changes helps to effectively and efficiently managing the interpersonal relationship between leaders and among employees in organizations (Tierney, 1988).

According to Tierney (1988) staff come to believe in their institution by the ways they interact and communicate with one another in their day-to-day activities, and if there is good communication and interaction it boosts their commitment through an implicit belief in the mission and activities of the organization. That is, if there is sense of belief of belongingness, academic, students and administrative staff feel they have their own contribution in the institution's endeavor to achieve its mission. Such beliefs however are developed when new members who join to the institutions have also developed same sense of belief through socialization and are "fit into the cultural milieu" of the organization (Tierney, 1988, p.16).

OC paves the way to smooth communication and mutual understanding among leaders, academic and administrative staff as well as with students. It is because it provides a shared system of meanings, which forms the basis of communication and mutual understanding among members of an organization (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). According to Furnham and Gunter (1993 in Martins & Terblanche, 2003, p.65), "if the organizational culture does not fulfill these functions in a satisfactory way, the culture may significantly reduce the efficiency of an organization". Martins (2000) on the other hand contended that the interaction and ways of acting by staff in the organization has an impact on innovation practices. In this regard, free and transparent communication is vital to materialize the use of interpersonal relationship in implementing MIs. According Martins and Terblanche (2003), to enhance open communication among individuals, teams and departments, "teaching personnel that disagreement is acceptable, since it offers the opportunity to expose paradoxes, conflicts and dilemmas can promote openness in communication" (p. 73). To these scholars, developing trust among staff to share and challenge each other supports innovation practice. Studies portray that interpersonal relationship among members of an organization plays a key role in understanding the dynamics of OC. In fact,

interpersonal relationship among members becomes useful dimension of OC when there is a culture that supports members of organization to create and share their knowledge and skills to each other (Holsapple & Joshi, 2001; Zhu & Engels, 2014). Ahmed (1998) also argues that when the degree to which staff feel free to discuss and debate issues actively, and the degree to which minority views are expressed readily and listened is high, there will be likely positive feelings of staff thereby enhance the likelihood of successful implementation of innovations. To do so, however, there should be a space that accepts criticism, expects and accepts conflict and address such issues in a proper way. According to Martins and Terblanche (2003), there should be a culture that tolerates and handles conflicts properly to support implementations of innovations. These scholars further argued that,

When there is conflict between different ideas, perceptions and ways in which information is processed and evaluated, the process of handling conflict should be handled constructively to promote creativity and innovation. Understanding different individual thinking styles and training personnel in the process of constructive confrontation will create a culture supportive of creativity and innovation (p.72).

Thus, for better implementation of such MIs, an interpersonal relationship among academic leaders supported by open communication is essential. As mentioned above, OC that supports open and transparent communication is vital for innovations to bring desired results in organizations. In this regard, staff need to develop an attitude that encourages disagreement on the innovation is acceptable and the possible conflicts and confusions that may arise during the process can be lessened through openness and communication (Martins & Terblanche, 2003).

#### **3.1.4 Consistency**

Consistency as a dimension of OC has close relationship to change and adaptation and also has both merits and demerits. The advantage of consistency is that it offers integration and coordination; however, if there is highly consistent culture the organization may often be most resistant to change and adjustment (Dennison & Mishra, 1995, p.215). In order for all staff in organizations understand their organization and get motivated to achieve the mission, there is a need to have understanding and agreement on the core values promoted by the organization. According to Denison and Mishra (1995), members of the organization need to share a set of core values which create a sense of identity and a clear set of expectations. In this regard, organizational members are able to reach agreement on critical issues that help them settle differences when they happen. So as to attain the common goals of the organization, the various units in the organization need to work on the core values of the organization. Such activities are collectively called consistency. On the critical role of values as dimensions of OC, Ahmed (1998) stated:

To effectively use culture over the long term, organisations need to also possess certain values and assumptions about accepting change. These values must be driven by the strategic direction in which the company is moving. Without these a strong culture can be a barrier to recognising the need for change, and being able to reconstitute itself even if the need is recognized (p. 33).

Taking O' Reilly's (1989) two dimensions of norms that show variations, Ahmed (1998) discussed how values could deeply influence organizational practice when these dimensions exist together. The dimensions are: intensity-amount of approval/disapproval attached to an expectation, and crystallization-prevalence with which the values are shared. According to Ahmed (1998), some values may be held by many people with no intensity. That is, there is a possibility where everyone in the organizations know what the leaders need without giving them strong approval or disapproval to the values advocated. On the other hand, some staff may have approval to some values and share them while others are against to those held and shared values. Hence, it is said that for values to have strong influence and facilitate innovation practice in organizations both intensity and crystallization should be met.

Moreover, values that encourage innovation practices need to be integrated to enhance the success of implementation of any innovation and specifically MIs. It is because MIs usually demand values that are often different from the traditional way of doing things. In this regard Brodtrick (1997 in Martins and Terblanche, 2003) mentions tolerance of mistakes as essential ingredients in implementing such innovations. That the way mistakes are handled has an important role in making staff to act confidently and freely to implement the innovation. In addition, successful institutions have a system that rewards for those staff that have shown better performance and provide opportunities for those staff that are lagging to learn from their mistakes or from other mistakes (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). Similarly values should encourage staff to feely talk to each other, inquire about the innovation and keep them updated to sustain the implementation of that innovation being practiced so that it can easily be institutionalized. Another pertinent value that needs to be embodied in the organizations practicing innovations is tolerance of handling conflicts and constructively solving in a way they can help the process of implementation. To do so, there should be continuous training on how to confront conflicts, and there should be an environment where individuals' way of thinking styles are understood (Martins & Terblanche, 2003).

### **3.1.5 Participation in decision making, flexibility and risk taking behavior**

Among Denison (1996) involvement or participation in decision making that constitutes empowerment, team orientation and capability development is one of the key players in organizations implementing change tools. While empowerment helps individuals to have the authority, initiative, and ability to manage their own activities and creates a sense of ownership



of the change, team orientation and capability development support staff to act together with relevant knowledge and skills in the organization.

Unlike the flexible structures that allow staff and academic leaders with opportunities to freely think, act and take risks on the change tools, Ahmed (1998) identified the various mechanistic ways of performing activities that serve as barriers of innovation practices in organizations (see table below for comparison). Some of these include: rigid departmental separation and functional specialization; hierarchical and many rules and set procedures; formal reporting; long decision chains and slow decision making; little individual freedom of action; much information flow upwards and directives flow downwards.

To make involvement facilitate innovation practices requires both social and structural setups. For instance, if organizations need full participation of staff in decision making process, it requires encouragement from leaders at all levels. On the other hand, a structure epitomized by flexibility and permissive to interaction of staff is necessary (Ahmed, 1998). Ahmed (1998) also contended that without structure that allows staff interaction, risks of implementing innovation and empowerment, involvement will only produce empty results even in the presence of strong leadership commitment. It is also said that while having a structure that empowers staff is quite essential, empowerment of staff should be provided with a strong value system that enables staff work their activities in alignment with the core values and goals of the organization.

Many scholars also link participation of staff in organizations a reason for success of organizations. For instance, Dennison (1984) argued, “Organizations with a participative culture not only perform better than those without such a culture, but the margin of difference that widens over time suggests a possible cause-and-effect relationship between culture and performance”(p.1).

Many studies show that innovation practice is influenced by social processes. However, it is also believed that structure of organization, whether it is rigid or flexible in terms of accommodating deviations, have a significant role during implementation process (Ahmed, 1998). Ahmed (1998) argues that organizations that prioritize organic structures over than mechanistic structures are more successful in implementing innovations and have a contribution in creating high commitment work systems that allow to address ongoing implementation problems.

**Table 1.** Comparison between organic and mechanistic structures

Organic structures promote innovation	Mechanistic structures hinder innovation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• freedom from rules;</li><li>• participative and informal;</li><li>• many views aired and considered;</li><li>• face to face communication; little red tape;</li><li>• inter-disciplinary teams; breaking down departmental barriers;</li><li>• emphasis on creative interaction and aims</li><li>• outward looking; willingness to take on external ideas;</li><li>• flexibility with respect to changing needs;</li><li>• non-hierarchical;</li><li>• information flow downwards as well as upwards.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• rigid departmental separation and functional specialization;</li><li>• hierarchical;</li><li>• bureaucratic;</li><li>• many rules and set procedures;</li><li>• formal reporting;</li><li>• long decision chains and slow decision making;</li><li>• little individual freedom of action;</li><li>• communication via the written word;</li><li>• much information flow upwards; directives flow downwards</li></ul>

Source: Ahmed (1998, p. 36)

Having a system that takes risks over too many management controls during implementation of such innovations is associated with effective implementation of innovation. In this regard, organizations should create an atmosphere in which mistakes are accepted and should be taken as learning experience. In doing so, academic leaders should encourage debates and open discussions to enhance positive attitudes of staff towards the innovation (Martins & Terblanche, 2003, p.72).

### **3.1.6 Summary**

As has been mentioned, use of conceptual framework enables a researcher to have clear focus and content on the issue under research, establish link between the research question and methodology and guide the whole process of the research. Based on such premise, the conceptual framework was made to constitute essential elements by consulting available literature.

In the literature, however, various studies have been using different frameworks to study OC in various contexts. Thus, considering these variations, attempt was made to thoroughly understand the differences and similarities of the existing dominant cultural study frameworks. The conceptual framework for this study is then developed following three steps, adapted from Ginevičius and Vaitkūnaite (2006), to select dimensions of OC. First, attempt was made to review from the sources of literature and dominant models in the study of OC and their dimensions were collected. Second, differently named dimensions were ascribed to one dimension if their content is found to be similar after analysis. In so doing, similar dimensions proposed by different authors were merged and viable dimensions that suit to the context of the

study were selected. Third, only those dimensions that are either empirically or theoretically supported to affect the implementation of innovations were selected. The dimensions developed by Denison (1996), Martins (1987) and Tierney (1988) were considered.

One of the models was Martins OC model. Martins (1987) developed an OC model based on the ideal organization and the relevance of leadership in creating an ideal OC. This model is based on interaction between sub-systems in organization, survival functions (internal and external systems), and the dimensions of culture. This model is considered as comprehensive as it encompasses many aspects of an organization upon which OC can have an influence and vice versa. Some scholars also claimed that this model can be employed to see how OC influences innovations in organizations. This model consists of six dimensions: mission and vision, external environment, means to achieve objectives, image of the organization, management processes, employee needs and objectives, interpersonal relationships and leadership. The second model considered for this study was Tierney's. Tierney (1988) on his part identified six dimensions: environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy and leadership. The third model is Denison's (1996) model that constitutes six cultural dimensions. These include empowerment, team orientation, capability development, creative change, customer focus and organizational learning. Hence, using the three steps adapted from Ginevičius and Vaitkūnaite (2006) a conceptual framework with six broad dimensions was developed from Denison (1996), Martins (1987), and Tierney (1988) dimensions to see the role of OC on the implementation of the selected MI (BPR). These dimensions comprise: consistency, participation in decision making/involvement, leadership, risk taking behavior and flexibility, interpersonal relationships, and mission and vision. Relevant literature was reviewed to understand each dimensions of OC.

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Research design

Even though there are some researchers who recommend use of mixed method to avoid the cons of both approaches (qualitative and quantitative) when used separately (Cai, 2008; Zhu & Engels, 2014), this study employed qualitative approach. Qualitative approach is “great for addressing ‘how’ questions-rather than ‘how many’; for understanding the world from the perspective of those studied (i.e., informants); and for examining and articulating processes” (Pratt, 2009, p. 856). Quantitative approach, on the other hand, is capable of using data to compare and analyze relationships and provide information in breadth from a large number of units that enable generalizations (Muijs, 2004). However, qualitative approach can help the researcher scrutinize the issue in-depth and capture insider views as it enables to collect thick descriptions. This in turn helps to discover features that are not constrained to a defined list of dimensions like that of quantitative research (Zhu & Engels, 2014). Qualitative approach also enables to study culture in its context. This is mainly because cultural influences occur at many levels, within the department and the institution, as well as at the system and state level, and for these reasons cultures vary dramatically (Tierney, 1988, p.5). Besides, since culture in itself is unique, even taking many institutions and participants may not guarantee for generalizations of results. That is, culture is value-laden and interpreted differently by different institutions. For such reasons, in-depth understanding of one institution is found appropriate. Thus, in order to deeply investigate the problem area in question, therefore, this study has chosen qualitative over quantitative approach.

Among the existing designs in qualitative research, this study has employed qualitative case study. Case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context) through developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case (Creswell, 2007). Choosing a particular strategy however should be guided by certain assumptions and perspectives (Creswell, 1998). In this regard, Yin’s (2009) assumptions for choosing case study were used. According to Yin (2009), case study method is preferred when the research attempts to explore ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions; the researcher has less control on the issue to be researched, and when “the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context” (p.2). In addition, studying OC demands having a complete picture of the organization to be assessed; it also requires the researcher to have contact and/or familiarity with the organization. This in turn requires the researcher to involve deeply, usually focusing on single case (Silva & Simona, n.d.). These researchers also argue that results of cultural researches should not be

transferred to other organizations for they are context specific. For these reasons, this study focused on a single case, one public university, in Ethiopia where the researcher has considerable experience in teaching and administration. Case study is then found appropriate to understand the research questions in this study for the mentioned reasons.

## **4.2 Research Setting, Participants and Sampling**

### **4.2.1 Research setting**

The setting chosen for this research is BDU. BDU is one of the public universities in Ethiopia. The university has currently 39, 227 students and about 1540 academic staff (BDU Registrar Office, 2015). The mission of the university reads “to contribute substantially for social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological development of the nation; through the provision of high quality education, active engagement in research and outreach activities for the betterment of life, while offering employees a conducive and rewarding working environment that values, recognizes and appreciates their contributions” and its vision is “to become one of the ten premier research universities in Africa in 2025 recognized for its quality education, research and outreach activities” (BDU, 2011, p.6). The university’s core values include: quality, integrity, transparency, accountability, rule of law, equality and, promoting diversity (BDU, 2011, p.7). As indicated in the strategic plan, the university promises to work to uphold to the core values to fulfill its mission and achieve its vision (BDU, 2011). Composed of four colleges (science, agriculture and environmental sciences, business and economics, and medical and health sciences), three faculties (education and behavioral sciences, social sciences, and humanities), one school (school of law), three institutes (Bahir dar institute of technology, institute of technology for textile, garment and fashion design, and land administration) and two academies (sport and maritime ) (BDU Registrar Office, 2015), the University has experienced sweeping changes in recent years, as is the case to many HEIs in the country.

BDU is selected as a case for the study using purposeful sampling. It is selected as a case because the university was at the forefront to implement MIs among the public HEIs in Ethiopia. Second, as mentioned above, studying one institution helps to understand the issue in-depth (Silva & Simona, n.d.). Another reason for choosing the setting is methodological. Case study demands to have in-depth knowledge of the setting which is essential (Yin, 2009). For these reasons, the researcher has selected BDU as he has good knowledge of the context. In addition, the researcher has experience in teaching and administration in the university that helps for data collection and understanding of the issue. Among the innovations tools so far introduced into the university, BPR is chosen to see the role of OC in the implementations of MIs as it has been implemented for the last six years; longer period of time compared to the other tools introduced later (BSC and Kaizen).

#### 4.2.2 Participants and Sampling

To understand the role OC plays in implementing MIs, it would be good if it can include diverse participants with experience on the issue to be researched. In this research, therefore, attempt was made to include academic leaders who work at different levels from the selected university (see below Table 2 for the composition). Purposeful sampling is used to select sixteen academic leaders from the University. In using this type of sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). Hence, academic leaders who have actively participated during implementation of BPR were included in the sample. Moreover, those leaders who have been in the implementation period but replaced by newly appointed leaders during time of data collection were included in the study.

**Table 2.** Participants' position and number

Position	Number
Vice president	2
Dean	6
Vice dean	5
Quality assurance officer	1
Human resource officer	1
Registrar officer	1

#### 4.3 Data Collection Tools and procedures

##### 4.3.1 Interview

In qualitative research, in-depth interview is recommended to gather data from people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002). Hence, the primary source of data for this study was an in-depth interview made in a semi-structured way to understand the selected participants' experience. Both One-on-One and E-mail interviews were used to collect data. One-on-One interview is a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions to and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). E-mail interviews on the other hand consist of collecting open-ended data through interviews with individuals using computers and the internet (Creswell, 2012, p. 219). The latter was used as some of the participants were not available during data collection and others had tight schedule during the time I was collecting data in the case university.

An interview protocol was prepared based on the conceptual framework from literature and

researcher's experience in the university. The guiding interview questions comprised general and specific questions that help to explore participants' views. The interview was made in language chosen by the participants, Amharic (official language). One-on-One interview was made with eleven participants in Amharic while E-mail interviews were made with five participants. The interviews ranged from 40' to 65'. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, translated and coded.

#### **4.3.2 Document**

In order to get additional information and full picture of the issue, selected documents such as the university's strategic plan, BPR design and survey report of the university, and discussion papers and reports (used at semester and annual meetings with staff) were reviewed. The data were used as a supplement and for triangulation of the interview data.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis technique**

Many scholars have proposed various techniques for qualitative data analysis. For instance, Stake (1995) identified two qualitative data analysis techniques: (a) categorical aggregation, which mainly works to interpret the raw data in line with certain themes, and (b) direct interpretation, which involves coding and interpreting the data without looking certain categories to allocate the raw data in accordance. Rubin and Rubin (1995 in O'Connor and Gibson, 2003) have also proposed similar to Stake's (1995) categorical aggregation. It starts with coding techniques for finding and marking the underlying ideas in the data, grouping similar kinds of information together in categories, and relating different ideas and themes to one another.

In this research, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data taking the dimensions identified in the conceptual framework as overarching themes. Taking these broad dimensions as themes, the researcher then adapted O'Connor and Gibson's (2003) step-by-step guide to qualitative data analysis to identify the categories under each theme. This step-by-step analysis was developed by O'Connor and Gibson's (2003) based on Stake (1995) and Rubin and Rubin (1995) ways of analysis. This way of analysis was selected in this study for it is found comprehensive and has indicated detail tasks the researcher has to do at each step. The first step is organizing the data. In this step, the researcher views the full data set in one location and systematically arranges to answer the research question at hand. The researcher organizes all the data from the transcript and makes a chart or a coding sheet and identifies those that were simply included in the interview guide but are not essential to answer the research questions. The second step is finding and organizing ideas and concepts. These include looking for words or phrases used frequently, coding or categorizing ideas and concepts. At this stage, the researcher tried to identify the data that fits to each dimension and later tried to carefully develop categories under each dimension. At this stage, the dimensions themselves were used as overarching themes. The third step in this

step-by-step analysis, which is adapted for this research, is merging the categories into themes which in this research are the dimensions identified from the outset. At this step, the researcher developed categories under some of the dimensions as the data collected was rich that did not permit to easily group the data into the dimensions (overarching themes).

#### **4.5 Trustworthiness**

O'Connor and Gibson (2003), fourth step is ensuring reliability and validity (trustworthiness in qualitative research) in the data analysis and in the findings. While quantitative researchers take into account the reliability, objectivity and validity to ensure the trustworthiness of the inquiry findings, qualitative researchers in contrast consider dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability as trustworthiness criteria to ensure the authenticity of qualitative findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). O'Connor and Gibson (2003) undelined that though this validation is an ongoing principle throughout the entire research process in qualitative research, they affirmed that the researcher need to consider triangulation from different sources and methods, obtaining feedback from participants, and acknowledging factors which may have influenced the participant's response at this stage. In this study as well, the researcher used these and other mechanisms to enhance the trustworthiness of the research.

Among the trustworthiness criteria, credibility establishes whether or not the research findings represent reasonable information drawn from the participants' data and a correct interpretation of the participants' is made based on these views (Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A qualitative researcher establishes rigor of the inquiry by adopting the following credibility strategies: prolonged and varied field experience, triangulation, member checking, interview technique, and establishing authority of researcher (Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, participants from different levels in the university with experience (triangulation of data sources (Krefting, 1991)) and participants' check were used to maintain the credibility of the research. The translated data of eleven participants was sent to each of them to get their feedback and thereby minimize the possible distortion that might happen during translation from Amharic (language used during interview) into English. Except one participant, all have replied and their responses were incorporated. The other issue that was made by the researcher during data collection was giving opportunities to participants to reschedule appointments if they are faced with other office tasks so that they can change to the time that suits them. To do so, the researcher gave phone and E-mail address to all participants so that they can change the appointment to a time convenient to them. Comfortable place of interview was arranged for those who were not comfortable to make an interview at their offices.

Another criterion of trustworthiness is transferability. According to Guba (1981), transferability is when the findings of the research fit into contexts outside the study situation which is determined by similarity of the contexts. Lincoln and Guba (1985) further noted that this



criterion is more the responsibility of the person who wants the findings to transfer to another context than that of the person who conducted the original research. The researcher here is supposed to present sufficient descriptive data that allows comparison. In this regard, sufficient thick descriptive accounts of interviewees were included in this study that may help interested researchers and readers.

The third component of trustworthiness is confirmability. Confirmability refers to objectivity or the extent to which the findings are shaped by the data and not researcher bias or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Though it is very hard for the researcher in qualitative research to completely separate oneself from the research (Patton, 2002), I have attempted to minimize my bias. In so doing, I tried not to use my opinion or belief unless it is justified by data from interview or documents. In addition, I invited one of my colleagues in my university to read the analysis and check if the major findings and conclusion I made are in line with the data I presented. Other strategies that are useful to establish confirmability are triangulation of multiple methods, data sources and theoretical perspectives (Krefting, 1991, p. 221). In this regard, multiple models of OC were merged and used to develop the conceptual framework that guided this study that could be considered as another way of ensuring confirmability. Nonetheless, care should be taken while transferring cultural researches as some scholars argue that such results should not be transferred to other organizations for they are context specific (Silva & Simona, n.d.).

Another essential element of trustworthiness in qualitative research is the issue of consistency, equivalent term to dependability in qualitative research (Krefting, 1991). According to O'Connor and Gibson (2003), insuring dependability requires diligent efforts and commitment for consistency throughout interviewing, transcribing and analyzing the findings. In order to secure consistency of data, an interview protocol was prepared based on literature and researcher's experience in the university. These guiding interview questions were made to include general and specific questions that help participants air out their views. The researcher followed the interview protocol to maintain consistency and has tried to limit his own bias in the analysis. In addition, the researcher attempted to consider all the transcribed data in identifying those ideas or categories that don't fit into the patterns and themes of the data. The last step in this step-by-step analysis of O'Connor and Gibson (2003) used in this study is finding possible and plausible explanations of the findings. It constitutes making a summary of findings and themes, checking whether the findings were as expected based on the literature, any major surprises in the findings and looking for differences and similarities to what is stated in the literature from other similar studies. Thus, attempt was made in this study to support the findings with earlier research results, and implications for practice that may be applicable for the case university are suggested.

#### **4.6 Ethical issues**

Attempt was made to address all anticipated ethical issues in the research. Participant confidentiality is of utmost importance in qualitative research (Creswell, 2012). According to Creswell, researchers need to protect anonymity of participants by assigning number or pseudonyms to them to be used in the process of analyzing and reporting data. Creswell also added that to gain support from participants, the researcher needs to convey to participants that they are participating in a study and inform them the purpose of the study. Hence, in this study, interview was made based on participants' agreement. Consent form was signed with some of the participants while majority of the participants chose oral consent to take part in interview. In addition to the consent form, the researcher briefed the objectives of the research to get the confidence of the participants. They were made aware that the information will be stored in a secured way and their identities will not be disclosed.

Participants were also told that their involvement in the interview is based on their willingness and that they can cancel the interview schedule anytime. To comfort the participants, they were asked to choose the language they want to be interviewed and all were interviewed in Amharic, the official language in Ethiopia. Participants were also asked if they are willing to be recorded and all the participants involved on One-on-One interview were found willing and it was tape recorded. These brief instructions that were relevant were also included in the E-mail interview sent to participants.

During analysis, the researcher used different ways to keep anonymity and privacy of participants. General terms like the middle level leader, dean and top level leader were used. Moreover, the researcher also used combination of letter and number (L1, L2, ... for leader 1, leader 2,...) in the analysis.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, analysis of academic leaders' understanding of OC and their views on the role of OC in the implementation of the selected MI (BPR) are presented. The analysis was made by taking each dimension in the conceptual framework as an overarching theme.

Under each theme, several categories were developed that emerged from the interview data. Relevant data that were drawn from the documents reviewed were also included in the analysis. Several categories were developed for some of the themes. To answer the first research question, understanding leaders' conceptualization of OC, a separate theme was developed and hence analyzed under the theme "academic leaders' conceptualization of OC". To answer the second research question, five themes were developed based on the dimensions. Under one of the major themes, role of leadership in implementing MI, five categories were developed. These are: leaders' understanding of MI, degree of commitment and ownership of implementation of MI, disconnection between middle and top level leaders, uncertainty and lack of follow-up of implementation, and reporting for conformity.

The other major themes include interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution, degree of risk taking behavior and flexibility, degree of agreement on mission, vision and values as well as degree of participation or involvement in decision making. The theme degree of agreement on mission, vision and values is composed of three categories- agreement on mission and vision, agreement on core values and its contribution to implementation of MI, and cultural clashes.

### **5.1 Academic leaders' conceptualization of organizational culture**

Understanding OC and having common view or shared meaning on what this means at institutional or university level have major importance in mobilizing the staff of the case university or in any organization towards the needed direction for successful implementation of MI. Having such common understanding of OC among university leaders and staff in general will also have a role in narrowing down the possible gaps of misunderstandings that may surface during implementation. Specifically, it may allow leaders to work together on common issues shared at institution level. Such understanding will also narrow down the possible confusions that may be created due to the presence of sub-cultures or disciplinary cultures that exist in each faculty or college while implementing university wide MI.

Although it is challenging to identify the right definition of OC at university level, leaders however should decide and agree on the most plausible definition that can accurately depict their context. Such agreements will allow leaders to make deliberation and sort out actions to help

them manage and, if need, modify the existing culture to fit to the new way of doing things. In addition, as Schein (1985) argued, doing so assists in identifying “the essence of culture” unlike focusing on the artifacts and products that are observable and that do not represent fundamental nature of culture.

When we see academic leaders’ conceptions of OC in the case university, it is found out that OC at institutional level is connected to different meanings that showed a wide array of disparities among leaders. Asked about how OC is understood at university level, a leader replied:

OC to my understanding is the shared view, attitude, and belief of those employees and leaders who are working in my university. These shared views, attitudes and beliefs determine our actions for the common good of our university. (L4)

Similar definition was also given by another leader, who conceived it as “...a way of creating a unifying spirit and moving towards the mission, vision and core values of the university”. (L12)

On the other hand, another leader defined OC as:

...employees and leaders’ attitude about the structure and work habit of their university; it includes how they work and what type of interpersonal relationship they have. It shows whether there is constructive engagement and healthy work environment. (L9)

When we see the above three definitions, L4 and L12 have similarities in that they referred culture in terms of “shared view” and “unifying meaning”. In fact, the former leader considered OC “the shared view” in itself while the later considered it as “a way of creating a unifying spirit”. There are also some differences in the definitions of the leaders in understanding OC on what components it constitutes. While L4 stresses on “shared views” of staff in the organization, L9 has limited it to employees’ attitude towards their work and the university in general. Similar definitions have been given by other leaders. For instance, to L13, OC is “the hierarchical structure and the relationship between these structures”. Others have defined OC as “values”, “work relationship”, “rules, regulations and procedures”, and as “way of doing, and rules and regulations that guide day-to-day activities”. Another leader, however, viewed OC in a different way compared to the above definitions. He mentioned:

I think it is the way of living together; we are living together though we are different in religion, sex, and views. For me, OC is diversity in nation and nationality, and respecting each other; because, in my opinion, the university is equated to ‘little Ethiopia’. We have more than 80 ethnic groups, and the students reflect these differences as they are drawn from different parts of the country. There are diverse

cultures in society, and it is the expression of that society. It is “a miniature society”.  
(L8)

Widening these divergent meanings of OC, another leader conceptualized it in a very broad way as “work system of an organisation that includes both the hardware and software parts of an organisation.” According to this leader, “The hardware parts might include the observable systems, resources of an organisation and the written and observable work procedures while the software parts include the unwritten work procedure, ethics and norms. Organisational culture governs the day-to-day activities of an organisation” (L14). As can be seen above, leaders’ views of OC at institution or university level in the case university is very divergent. These divergences of OC definitions ranged from very broad that equated it to whole “work system” and a small scale representation of the country “a miniature society” to “values” and “work relationships” that are considered as a dimension of OC by several OC researchers (Denison, 1990; Martins, 2000; Tierney, 1988). Another leader also failed to give his own definition of OC considering it as “... so abstract and complex” to define and understand.

Such diversity of understanding are not wrong; neither do they show leaders’ inability to understand OC for the concept is clumsy and does not lend itself to a single definition (Davies, Nutley & Mannion, 2000; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Schein, 1990 ). Taken together, however, these views provide important insights about academic leaders’ understanding of their OC at corporate or institution level. In general, therefore, academic leaders agreed neither in their definitions of OC nor on what elements does it constitute at university level. All academic leaders, however, unanimously agreed that OC is very decisive for any type of organizational success especially if the university aspires to realize those institutional reforms.

It is well documented in the literature that our way of conceptualization guides our actions and hence affects our practice. In this regard, Magrini (2009) asserted that the way we conceive things have decisive role in framing our practice. For instance, from the above definitions, leaders who see culture as “work relationship” and those who see it as “rules, regulations and procedures” will have different tasks and activities that they will take to improve the culture of the units or university. Particularly, such differences at university level may have detrimental effect in implementing MI for leaders lack shared view or meaning about what and how of doing things. In a related note, Haneberg (2009) argued that “The effectiveness of leaders, and collectively, the management team, will mirror the health and success of the organization. But here’s the rub -if you and your fellow managers are not modeling the desired culture, you will not be able to realign the culture and you will not achieve your goals” (p.6).

Irrespective of the divergence of meanings academic leaders hold about OC, the way they understood it at organization or institutional level should have some similarity in reflecting a shared meaning. In other words, OC at institutional level need to have a pattern of shared values

and beliefs that aid academic leaders and staff understand organizational functioning since such shared meanings in turn provide them norms for behavior in the university (Deshpande & Webster, 1989). Tierney (1988, p.4) also contended that “the culture of an organization is grounded in the shared assumptions of individuals participating in the organization”. Otherwise, if there is no common understanding of OC among leaders at the university, it is quite expected to have different practices on common issues that have to be shared and be practiced by all staff. This in turn may lead to inconsistent practice and as many of the interviewees reported “failure of implementation”. This argument holds true when it is related with the context of the case university that introduced and implemented university wide MI. As it has been mentioned in the literature, the university introduced BPR to all its colleges and faculties, and all staff, academic as well as administrative were involved in the implementation. Hence, how all leaders view OC at institutional level is quintessential to successfully implement the innovation at university level; if not, it will be challenging task for leaders to lead and give directions on such university wide implementation. Moreover, in such scenarios where the culture is not shared, it is hard for the organization to progress and avoid the possible misunderstandings regarding the MI. Jung et al. (2007) also argued that while there might be fragmented subcultures in an organization, there should be shared culture among groups and individuals that needs to be remembered for successful implementation of MI. Such shared views or meaning are mainly imperative when implementing organization-wide change (Haneberg, 2009, p. 3).

## **5.2 Role of leadership in implementing management innovation**

### **5.2.1 Leaders’ understanding of management innovation**

One of the factors for successful implementations of any innovation is leaders’ understanding of it so that they can effectively guide and follow the process (Madu, 2011). All interviewees, however, mentioned that lack of in-depth understanding of the MI was a major barrier during implementation of BPR in the case university. Some of the leaders affirmed that if they were well acquainted with the essence of the MI being implemented, it could have helped them to make sound decisions. Others also echoed this and added that problems of understanding of BPR by the top leadership have fueled the misunderstanding and confusions on middle level leaders and the university community in general. A concern on time between preparation and implementation was also mentioned as one factor for lack of understanding of the innovation among staff and leaders’ themselves. All middle level leaders mentioned the presence of clear disparity among the top leaders in their understanding of the innovation that often led middle level leaders and staff to confusion, uncertainty and even mistrust towards the top leadership and the tool (BPR). In this regard, a dean affirmed the presence of lack of understanding:

...the majority of the university community is neither clear nor interested to know what is happening. This might have emanated from lack of clarity of the management

tools being implemented. Most of the people including myself are not clear on the differences of the tools. For example, it is very hard for many including myself to differentiate BPR, BSC and Kaizen. Neither the top management nor anyone concerned [transformation office] did enough to clarify such misunderstandings, and what so far has been done is insufficient. (L1)

In fact, all the deans interviewed believe that the implementation of BPR has “failed before it is properly and fully implemented”. One top leader mentioned it as “half-implemented” referring only to the structural aspect. Hence, one of the reasons for such failures to achieve BPR’s promised intents could be attributed to lack of understanding among leaders. Many of the interviewees affirmed that the lion’s share for this failure is related with failure to understand the innovation by the majority of the top leaders.

Another leader called the introduction of BPR, as “an installation” and described it as “unfit to university system”, and mentioned that “the conceptualization and detail understanding were limited to those groups who were in the team [study team established by the university to justify the need for introducing BPR]”. He commented on why such lack of understanding among leaders prevailed in the university:

There was only orientation kind of training for all involved in the implementation process; I think this is one of the main reasons for poor understanding. It would have been better to really make the MI well understood by all involved before going to implementation hastily. There was no continuous mental engagement on principles of BPR and follow up of the practice was also minimal. In my view, except those who were involved in the study team, no one had good understanding of BPR. (L4)

Another leader also commented:

The leaders did not do much to make the staff understand the innovation, it was limited to orientation, for this reason most of the employees do not even know what it is; let alone to work hard to see its impact on the university’s performance. (L13)

The above idea was echoed by all the interviewees including members of the top leadership. The top leaders also believed that there was no time for serious discussion and debate because of the strong desire to immediately implement. One of the top leaders mentioned that except one or two people who were in the study team and who later become members of the top leadership, none of the other leaders had in-depth understanding of BPR. He continued to say that one of the reasons for lack of understanding and confusions of BPR among leaders and employees was simultaneous implementation of various tools. He commented:

MIIs are not implemented in an integrated manner; rather it was in a piecemeal approach. E.g. implementers perceived that the latter innovation (BSC) is succeeding the former (BPR). Even the same trainers on BPR and BSC failed to show how integrated the two MIIs are. The speed at which BSC and then Kaizen came didn't allow the University to internalize, adapt and apply the former before the next comes along. (L15)

Some other leaders also attributed the presence of lack of understanding of the innovation as source for lack of interest to engage in the implementation process. For instance, L5 mentioned that "...majority of the staff are dealing with the change without interest as they had no in-depth understanding of the tool". He also criticized the top leaders "urgency and pressure to implement BPR". He also described the implementation as "a campaign" and continued to say, "Even though it is a direction from the government, it should not be implemented without having sufficient understanding. The top leaders were trying to impose us [middle level leaders and staff] by mentioning it as the direction of the government rather than trying to help us understand and recognize its benefits." This middle level leader's view was also supported by many of the interviewees and the reason, "it is a direction from the government and you should implement it", is seen as "a pretext" for their (top leaders) failure to convince the staff about the nature and need of BPR. Unlike other leaders, a college dean mentioned, the presence of curiosity among his staff to know and understand the innovation; but he says he was obstructed due to lack of understanding on the side of his leaders and himself. He said:

In my college the majority staffs are young and energetic. Most of them want to know and understand the newly introduced innovation tools. However, despite these facts, we (leaders) are engaged in defense of the innovation than allowing the staff to criticize it and learn from their criticisms. Neither the top leaders nor I were in a position to engage in open discussion and debate with the staff. Some of the staff were even labeled as change resistant for they are not subservient and not fully accepting what is coming from the top for granted. (L10)

Academic leaders agree that lack of understanding of the MI implemented is partly caused by unplanned and untimely change of leaders<sup>7</sup>. As one of the leaders mentioned, "There is no stability in the top and middle level leadership. New people come and after they adapt to the

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<sup>7</sup> Change of leaders in the university was in fact noticeable for everyone. For instance, leaving aside the changes made on the middle level leaders, the university had unstable top leadership in the last decade. In the last 11 years there were changes of 3 presidents, 6 academic vice presidents, 4 business and development vice presidents. This is also common experience in the newly established structure of vice presidents (information and strategic communication, and Research and Community services) though less in number compared to the former positions.



changes then they leave. This was considered to be one of the challenges that is created problem during implementation”. L15, a top leader, further argued that this change of leaders is not only causing misunderstandings in the implementation process but also inconsistency to lead the process due to “lack of institutional memory”. He mentioned, “Most of the change agents with demonstrated capacity and potential left the institution. There is high turnover of leadership. There is no system for institutional memory.” The leadership change was metaphorically expressed by one of the middle level leaders as a relay race where the stick (the innovation) drops at one point while the athletes (leaders) are running without it. He meant that the guiding principles and ideas of the MIs are lost on the way as there is no smooth leadership transition. This was in fact the experience of the researcher while working in the leadership. People in top leadership as soon as they come to power and promised to work together, they ended up becoming arc enemies. This was seen at many instances. This story of a leader sums up the consequences of untimely change of leaders:

When the tool was introduced, there were attempts to make the then existing culture to fit to the change tool. But, after some of the leaders have been replaced then the new members of the top leadership have to deal differently. They tried to influence with no understanding of the innovation and there appeared disagreement amongst them. The differences later widened and it killed all the process. The new leaders started to act against the tool and were trying to relate the tool with individuals who left the position and dissociate themselves from the process. This led the majority of staff to be suspicious of BPR. (L3)

The above leader also mentioned that the intervention made by the university board was not enough to reconcile those differences. He further mentioned that the innovation was highly personalized where the misunderstandings were attributed to those individuals who left the position than giving strategic solutions to the problems.

In general, therefore, one can learn from the excerpts of the interviews that lack of understanding of the MI has been one of the major barriers for implementation. Particularly, top leaders lack of understanding of the innovation except few, lack of delivering organized or team leadership often resulted from differences on the MI, insufficient time between preparation and implementation, and lack of proper and rigorous training to challenge the existing beliefs of the staff were some the reasons mentioned by interviewees for lack of understanding among leaders in the university.

Previous studies have also portrayed the need for leaders to have a good understanding of their organizational changes if such changes are to achieve their intended purpose. According to Schein (2004), OC becomes an important tool in leadership if it is well understood by leaders. He argued that once it is established and accepted, leaders will have a good opportunity to share

their assumptions and values to the staff and those shared assumptions are transferred to new members of the organization. That is, as far as leaders maintain to have good understanding of what is transpiring in their organization, be consistent in sending clear signals about their priorities, values and beliefs, they can achieve success. Riter (1994) also contended that if leaders are to influence and bring success to implementation of innovation practices, they need to have a deeper understanding of the implementation and their organizational life in general. Riter further cautioned that leaders should do beyond expressing “slogans, wishful thinking and fantasies” to help their staff get deeper understanding of changes.

### **5.2.2 Degree of commitment and ownership of management innovation**

It is quite sensible to assume that while a very ambitious MI is being implemented, full commitment and sense of ownership with careful follow up of the process is expected from all leaders at different levels in the university. As reported by many of the interviewees, however, the top leadership was pushing the MI to the middle level leaders and the middle level leaders in turn were pushing downwards to the staff without having sufficient understanding of what and how to do it. All the middle level leaders involved in this study indicated that the degree of determination of the top leaders to implement BPR was reportedly very low. Their poor understanding of the MI has led them to provide poor guidance and failure in addressing the concerns of the middle level leaders and staff. Interviewees from both top and middle level leaders are of the opinion that neither the middle level nor the top leaders were able to win the hearts and minds of the staff. Owing to the lack of substantial commitment and sense of ownership of the top leaders, the middle level leaders believe that “full scale implementation of BPR has failed”. As noted in the earlier section, L4 believes that one of major problems for the failure to fully implement BPR is low staff readiness to accept the change and participate in the implementation. This leader commented: “the staff in the university is highly resistant to change. One of the reasons is that the leaders including myself are not committed to give them proper support and help them understand the changes. For instance, the training and workshops given so far are limited to awareness creation, and with few exceptions, it is very hard to find leaders who take BPR very seriously”. Another leader, mentioned commitment of the staff as follows:

..., my university has faced formidable challenges as job satisfaction and motivation are very low to take up new ideas and try out. On one hand, BPR is theoretically pleasing and on the other hand it requires a lot of dedication, commitment and resources to put it into practice. When we come to the idea of readiness and commitment by the university staff, they trailed far behind the expected. (L12)

Others however extended the reasons for low commitment and sense of ownership beyond failure of staff and leaders to understand the innovation. These leaders though they are in

agreement with the idea that lack of understanding of innovations has contributed to the hazy implementation, they also believe that the source of the MIs (i.e. approach of the government), which is recurrently mentioned by the interviewees as “imposed”, had also contribution. Top leaders’ approval of all MIs coming from the government for granted was, therefore, mentioned by some of the interviewees as source of displeasure and lack of commitment among middle level leaders. Scarcity of evidence to show the staff that such MIs (BPR, BSC and Kaizen) are suitable to HE context has also contributed to lack of commitment and sense of ownership. In this regard, one of the members of the top leadership stated:

For any MI to be implemented there must be evidence –be it from government or the University itself –that it will work. Direction was given by the government to implement BPR, which came with a “one-size-fits-all” approach that led many to disengagement. (L15)

Related to this, another reason for lack of commitment and sense of ownership by leaders is the intervention of the university board<sup>8</sup> in routine affairs of the university. A leader mentioned:

In principle, the skeleton/structure of University governance from MoE to Academic Unit level (stipulated in HEP 650/2009) can be workable. The problem is associated with its implementation. First of all, mistrust seems to exist between government and universities. Consequently, the university is strictly controlled by board members who represent sector offices. There is interference in university-level decision making – even on academic matters. (L15)

The above leader mentioned the recent direction from MoE to approve new academic programs by board as an example of direct interference in routine university affairs. Other leaders also corroborated the above view that the interference of the board in routine activities of the university has led the top leaders to engage in routine activities than on strategic issues, as stated in the HEP 650/2009, and to give more of their time to “political commitments”. Such intervention to some of the interviewees is source for lack of commitment and sense of ownership among leaders and staff for they presume from the outset that the MI is imposed. To

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<sup>8</sup> Article 5, HEP (650/2009), states the board members shall be past or present holders of responsible positions and notable personalities especially in teaching or research and in integrity, or be representatives of the customers of the products and services of the institution and whose exceptional knowledge, experience and commitment are such as to enable them to contribute to the attainment of the mission of the institution and the objectives of HE generally. The board, however, constitutes the president of the university, a nonvoting member and secretary of the board, and others who represent other government sector offices, and in fact are members or supporters of the ruling party with key positions.

this end, one of the top leaders commented that “readiness presumes the need for change, which in turn needs critical reflection on the business one is doing and commitment to improve it. Who really cares to implement a MI that is perceived as an imposition? The worst is if implementers believe the imposition is from a body that they don’t trust/appreciate.” He asks, “How can one expect staff to own the MI which is not owned by the leaders? I remember the frustration of the change agents as a result of negligence, if not obstruction, from the respective top leaders”.

Other leaders, on the other hand, have concern on implementing such innovations in HE context. Many of the middle level leaders agree with the idea that such tools need contextualization so that they can work in the specific institutional cultural context, especially in HE. They mentioned such problems as sources for lack of commitment and ownership for majority staff are suspicious of the tools.

The staff’s sense of ownership and commitment was also reported to be very low compared with what is expected of them in implementing the innovation. Some interviewees claim that what is manifested as a culture in the university is the reflection of the larger society. They mentioned that the society’s “low value to knowledge and innovation” in general is affecting the university to demonstrate itself as an academic institution. L15 for instance puts the reason for lack of commitment and sense of ownership of leaders and the staff in general as reflection of the culture of larger society that is driven by traditional sets of beliefs. He mentioned: “...though BDU is a learning institution, knowledge is not valued by its community. ...Employees take for-granted that they will get monthly salary which needs only one’s signature 2x per working day. Though academic staffs are in principle expected to do research and publish, they don’t tend to conform to the expectation –the values didn’t become a norm”. (L15)

Another leader, L14, corroborated the above idea and asserted that the society’s culture at large is influencing the implementation: “even, as an Ethiopian, our work culture and other cultural practices such as culture of secrecy and being authoritative, suspicions of changes, etc can affect the university’s work culture and hence the implementation of innovations”. In addition, others mentioned prioritizing individual interest over organizational as an additional reason for low commitment and ownership. For instance, a leader commented:

Majority of the staff prioritizes its individual interest over organizational needs. It is very hard to find individuals who defend their university. The MIs are judged in terms what benefits will bring to them than to the organizational priorities at large. It is not easy to find staff who say “I am a member of the organization and my contribution is important to the success of my university mission”. (L2)

Another leader grouped the university staff into two in terms of their commitment. He mentioned the first group as minority that has better experience and knowledge and believes on the need for

change; however, this group at the same time believes the change will not be sustainable citing evidence that such changes are limited to short time campaign and adds lack of fertile ground to get implemented. The second group is the majority that does not accept change and is not ready for implementation. This group is also against the leaders who try to enforce the implementation and wants to halt every activity related to BPR. Many of the leaders have similar concerns on the sustainability of the implementation of such innovations caused by lack of commitment and ownership. They believe that the implementation is failing and is going back to the statuesque as many of the changes implemented due to BPR such as modularization<sup>9</sup>, new modes of delivery, assessment, etc. are highly compromised. For instance, some of the leaders mentioned the current mix up of the old and new structures by the top leadership as an example in the case university.

In general, the interviewees agreed that there is low commitment and ownership among leaders and staff in implementing MI. The reasons mentioned are staff resistance for they feel it is imposed change, association of the innovation tools to personal gains than institutional benefits, imposition by top leaders in the name of government driven agenda, and intervention of the board on routine affairs of the university. There was only a dean who positively considers his role as “mere implementer of what is coming from the government as any civil servants do” while the rest mentioned such impositions as against their freedom and faculty autonomy citing nature and basic values of HEIs.

### **5.2.3 Disconnection between middle and top level leaders: “We” and “They”**

In addition to the view that top leaders themselves are not in same platform in terms of understanding the MI, it is also reported by interviewees that there appears a disconnection between middle and top leaders.

As many people would presume, the leaders at all levels are supposed to have common understanding, if not agreement, on issues that they share in their organization. Particularly, when change is introduced and implemented, common understanding of the change principles among all leaders and staff is mandatory. Riter (1994) is of the opinion that when “an

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<sup>9</sup> HEIs in Ethiopia have embarked on major reform in the last decade. For the reform to take effect, the institutions have used BPR as a tool. In the re-engineering of the teaching learning process, modularization was proposed as a best way for the implementation of curricula and the production of competent graduates (MoE, 2012, p.9). Modularization is defined as a process of developing a self-contained and independent learning units (modules) in a given study program that results in set of learning outcomes leading to the acquisition and development of certain professional competencies as described in graduate profile (MoE, 2012, p.21).

organization has distinct culture: in terms of ... values and that is also experienced as successful, unique and distinct from its environment, and sustains interpersonal interaction, provides a specific social identity for its members". In such organization staff tend to identify themselves as "part of an overall 'we' and experience unity and closeness with the whole organization" (p. 40). On the other hand, if such culture is ambiguous people get confused and unnecessary collisions may occur between people at different hierarchical status (top, middle or bottom). As reflected by all middle level leaders, there is disconnection between middle and top level leaders wherein the middle level leaders pointed the finger at the top leaders for all the "failures in the implementation" and "the misunderstandings created". There is clear rift of "we" and "they". As reported, their relationship is characterized by "imposition", "command" or "dos and don'ts" and even "mistrust".

One middle level leader, L6, asserted: "I do not have trust on the top leadership. They do not keep their promises. They do not really have the capacity to convince or at least properly reflect the tool or process of implementation. They always try to please their bosses than addressing our [middle level leaders] concerns." Another leader echoed this idea and mentioned the problem as deep rooted for majority of the top leaders do not have good understanding of the innovation. He mentioned that top leaders try to impose than freely discuss and debate on issues that matter. He said:

There is no challenge of what is coming down from the top [MoE or the university board]. The top leadership accepts as it is, and tries to impose on us [deans]. The concerns we raise on the tool are not welcomed and entertained positively at all. It is very hard for the top leaders to deviate from what is being said from the top which in turn make it very hard for us to deviate too. (L11)

Another dean further claims that the top leaders have failed to deliver their roles as role models in terms of leading the change and creating a culture that is compatible to the MI implemented. This leader, L3, mentioned: "It (top leadership) always wants to do things in campaign and many of us believe that, after such pressure for short period of time, they will forget it. It is like 'running to fight fire' and I did not see anyone trying to align the existing culture with the new demands of BPR. Neither we nor the top leaders do. Even you don't see them acting as role models in taking the change forward."

Previous studies have also reported similar experiences. For instance, Ahmed (1998) found out that most organizations are reluctant to make the necessary resources and commitment required by the innovation implemented. Instead they dabble in innovation. Such reluctance are expressed by frequent meetings and hot discussion at the beginning of implementation at high-level management, meager resources assigned and "often the commitment usually ends there". Nonetheless, implementation of innovations demands more than discussion and allotting resources; it requires an OC that constantly guides organizational members to strive for

successful implementation of the innovation and thereby attain the intended outcomes (Ahmed, 1998, p.30).

Another source of disagreement between the middle and top leaders during implementation is the time for preparation and implementation of the MI. While the top leaders try to immediately implement it without due preparation, most of the deans claimed that there were concerns on their side and the staff. They blame the top leadership for not listening and trying to address their concerns. As one of the deans, L9, asserted: “The top leadership is not focused. It does not give sufficient time to deans’ concerns or the staff in general; it rather is engaged in implementing emergent issues<sup>10</sup> from the board or MoE”. Another dean supported this idea and mentioned lack of institutional integrity that often lead to lack of good relationship among leaders. Others further commented that imposition by top leaders is one of the reasons that exacerbated disconnection between top and middle level leaders.

Taken together, the top leaders look tightly coupled with the university board and MoE while they seem loosely coupled with middle level leaders. According to Birnbaum (1988, p.39), when there is loose coupling the connections between organizational subsystems become infrequent, circumscribed, weak in their mutual effects, and slow to respond. Similarly, as can be seen from the academic leaders’ account, the middle level leaders feel that they are disconnected with the top leaders as the later are not responsive to their concerns. The top leaders, as reported, however, have quite strong connection with the university board and the ministry, which is often seen as intervention in the university’s routine affairs by majority of the interviewees.

#### **5.2.4 Uncertainty and lack of follow-up of implementation**

Many of the middle level leaders are doubtful about their own roles as a leader as well as the top leadership’s involvement and responsibility in the implementation of the innovation. Such uncertainties of responsibilities were attributed to different bodies. One is the top leadership’s lack of commitment and sense of ownership (as mentioned above), and the other is similar observed problems by the majority of the staff in their respective college and faculties. It was also noted that the top leadership’s lack of focus and time to properly lead the implementation and their focus on issues from the ministry or the board, and its lack of provision of space to the middle level leaders to do things on their own way were reported to be factors for “the failure of full-fledged implementation”.

Some middle level leaders reiterated the lack of mechanism on side of the top leaders to closely follow up the implementation of the innovation, and said that the top leaders are only keen to get

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<sup>10</sup> As discussed during interview, emergent issues are those issues that are coming from the government often incidentally about meetings with middle level leaders, staff and students on current national and/or political issues.

reports of implementation from middle level leaders with no attention to staffs' confusions and complaints on the process. Moreover, some of the interviewees said that the reports presented by the top leaders in those rare public meetings often do not reflect actual practice. The middle level leaders underlined the existence of a gap between what is reported by top leaders with what is being implemented on the ground. Some of the interviewees implied such practice as source of conflict between staff and the top leaders. Such experiences led the staff to lose trust on the top leaders and started to identify those middle level leaders who even try their best to implement as 'puppet' of the top leadership. A top leader commented:

Regarding the leaders, first of all, being an academic leader is treated as a part-time job. Thus, people are swinging between academic and leadership life. Secondly, there is neither incentive (tied with performance measurement) nor recognition. Thus, competent people are not attracted. If staffs are interested in those positions, then it is mostly with vested interest (for personal/material gains as we can witness with the recent developments). (L15)

Another reason for uncertainty was on the nature of BPR. Some are still cautious of whether this tool fits to university context as it entails transformation or radical change. A dean asserted:

As a leader, I appreciated the theoretical value of BPR, and I also envisaged the potential in it to bring the desired change in my Faculty. Although BPR started its strong grip in our university, its full-fledged implementation was abandoned. Everybody was suspicious and considered it as one-size-fits-all European ideas that cannot be practical in Ethiopian soil. (L11)

With regard to this, previous studies also show the need for cautious approach when such business tools are introduced as they may not fit with the nature of academic settings. As mentioned by many of the leaders, BPR requires transformation while the university context is not in a way to be so. That is, university transformation is not guaranteed by quick fix of problems and by introducing MIs in academic settings. It is because academic settings have unique characteristics that may not easily permit to fit to the requirements of newly introduced MIs (Birnbaum, 1988). In this regard, Clark (1998) argued that university transformations need "a structured change capability and development of an overall receptive change". That is, transformation happens when there is change in the academic heartland as it is reliant on what the staff and students are doing. Clark further argues that transformation does not happen because a university has established university committee to bring a new idea or because the top leader shows interest to do so.

Many of the leaders including the top leaders who participated in the study are also uncertain about the outcome of implementing the innovation and they are not also confident on its



sustainability. Of the reasons mentioned that contributed to uncertainty were lack of proper guidance and open discussion and debate, and the top-down approach of the MI. A dean contended:

As a dean, I don't really have an opportunity to reflect my views on the progress of the implementation. Even in the senate meeting people are not active. Just many have lost confidence on the top leadership as the top leaders do not need to get challenged. It is a top down approach and the follow up is limited to reports that they [top leadership] want to get it reported. (L5)

Academic leaders reported that lack of stability in the top leadership, which was also a reported as a reason for lack of understanding of the innovation, caused uncertainties and inconsistency of implementation. It has also been mentioned as a reason for lack of strong follow up. It was reported that almost all those who have participated in studying the innovation tool are not in the leadership. This created inconsistency and lack of sustainability on the change ideas introduced as the new leaders were not able to confidently deliver their guidance. Another dean complained about the handling of directions coming from outside the university (MoE and university board):

When something comes from the ministry, it is just a must do it. Even the university calendars are compromised. The top leaders do not want to listen and see other options. They want to implement it as it is without taking the situation into consideration that always creates state of uncertainty. (L4)

Leaders have reflected mixed views on the intervention of the university board. While some see its intervention in routine issues as overriding the university's autonomy, others are of the opinion that it helped a lot especially in following up the implementation at the beginning of the process. Yet, the latter group says the support was inconsistent and often limited to random assessment of the process that did not reflect the general picture of the implementation. They also say that the board members had reliance on the top leaders' report that does not reflect the reality. A dean mentioned, "...there was intervention by the university board especially in clarifying the change and need for it which was helpful. It served as a catalyst and was reinforcing the change but that support was not consistent and later it was terminated". (L3)

Others also see the intervention of the university board causing dependency. That is, the top leaders rely on intervention of the board on every issue that in turn affected the momentum of the implementation. L10 commented that "The progress is not incremental rather it is sometimes interrupted and depends on the outside push to go forward." Others also mentioned the intervention has resulted in "campaign" of doing things that in turn caused uncertainty among leaders and staff. L3 mentioned "Most believe that it is campaign and will terminate after

sometime; so, majority of the staff and leaders as well have the assumption that engaging in it is wastage of time for such campaigns are not sustainable from experience”.

With regard to the causes of lack of proper follow up of the implementation, though all leaders agree on the lack of systemic monitoring of the process, they have differences on what causes this problem. Some leaders attributed the lack of follow up of the implementation with lack of in-depth understanding of the innovation, lack of readiness and low sense of ownership among leaders; others related it to the nature of BPR as discussed in the aforementioned section. Other also mentioned that lack of proper follow up was partly caused by lack of legislation that fits to the new system. L7 mentioned that “I had a painful experience to take actions in my faculty. It is because we had no new legislation though we were ought to implement new structure and process. Still there is no legislation for the last five years as we are using the old one. The top leaders did not take it seriously. There were no clear guidelines that support the process of implementation despite few individuals’ efforts.” As majority of the leaders reported, though many concerns are raised and reported, no one follows up and reports back to the staff that they say resulted in helplessness. Though there are few middle level leaders who are committed to implement the change, they are burning out and the top leaders are also not doing much to give them support. A dean mentioned “The top leaders always believe that telling or informing responsibilities of the deans and other middle level leaders is sufficient condition for successful implementation to happen”. In general, uncertainty and lack of follow up are demonstrated during implementation caused by lack of open discussion and support, nature of BPR itself (radical change vs. HE context), and lack of team spirit among leaders.

### **5.2.5 Reporting for conformity**

All middle level leaders agreed that they are reporting their work activities to the top leadership as part of bureaucratic requirements and fulfill their requests. As some of them reported, the top leadership is willing to listen only what it wants to listen than sharing their challenges and providing them support. Their report is compiled in order to fulfill such demands than what has been accomplished on the ground. Another reason mentioned by middle level leaders for compliance was lack of feedback on their plans and reports from the top leadership. There seems common agreement on all the middle level leaders that the top leaders are reporting to the university board and the MoE for conformity than reporting them the reality on the ground and take actions for improvement. This report for conformity is also partly attributed to impositions or external pressures from inside (top leaders) and outside (university board and ministry). As mentioned by all interviewees, while the former ones pressure the middle level leaders the later do same on top leaders. A dean, L4, accentuated this by saying “The top leadership accepts everything that comes from outside. They also want to report to and comply with the demands of the government.” Talking about how such practice has become a tradition, another middle level leader commented:

They [top leaders in university] are highly committed to report to their managers than using our report to really understand and inform the implementation. They give priority to whatever issues that are directly coming to the university from the top. I think it might be because of fear of external pressure that makes them rely on such practice of reporting. We are also reporting in similar manner. (L4)

It is particularly interesting here that despite many of the interviewees attributed reporting for compliance to imposition and pressure from inside and outside of the university, others attached such external focus, strong connection with government bodies, as a reflection of top leaders' grip for power. As some of the deans mentioned for the top leaders are appointed by the government (ministry and university board), "despite presence of nominal elections of the vice presidents", they have to satisfy what they are ordered to do by the university board and the ministry if they have to stay in the leadership. One top leader also complemented this idea by saying that "disagreement on some issues with the ministry or the university board may cost one's stay in leadership position".

There are also concerns about this "reporting for the sake of reporting" becoming a tradition in the university which is also being practiced by majority of the staff. L10 asserted: "Reporting for the sake of reporting is becoming a tradition not only on the top leadership as it is used to be but also on majority of the academic staff as well. When you seriously evaluate their reports, in many cases, they do not really reflect the practice and seems that they are reporting to fulfill the requirement so as to avoid presumed conflicts for not doing so". Another dean also complemented this view saying: "I assume that majority of the staff are feeling as if they are forced to implement BPR. You do not see them interested to engage in the implementation. It is then hard to expect better report in such situation. It is just for formality and to say that 'we have implemented the changes'". Sibhato and Singh (2012) in their assessment of BPR implementation in two public HEIs in Ethiopia identified the factors that hinder its implementation, and one of these major factors was false report to outsiders that hide actual progress of implementation partly attributed to frustration with slow result on behalf of the top management.

To sum up, results suggest that the culture of reporting is highly diluted by the top leaders' practice and external pressures. Interviewees' excerpts reinforce the feeling that staff are also entering to the culture of reporting for conformity (lack of reports showing real practice that inform the implementation process). It is also reported that as the middle level leaders are getting no feedback on their reports, they are not valuing reporting and are facing difficulty to improvise the implementation process.

### **5.3 Interpersonal relationships and handling of conflicts**

Interpersonal relationship is one of the crucial dimensions of OC in implementation of change (Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Tierney, 1988). The university to properly deliver its functions, smooth leaders' interpersonal relationship with staff and among themselves is vital. It is believed that the more stronger the attachment and bond between academia and leaders, and among leaders themselves is, the higher the success rate for effective implementation of any MI ideas. This is mainly because close attachment conveys that leaders are accessible, they are there to listen to each other and academia opinions and comments; it also helps to know what is going on in the institution. This in turn helps to bring sense of ownership of institutional matters. It could also help to increase the shared understanding among all those involved in the implementation of MIs. However, despite such relevance, all interviewees are in agreement that there is no team spirit and common understanding on the implementation of MI among leaders at all levels in the university. It was also reported by majority of the middle level leaders that their relationship with the top leadership and among the top leaders themselves is hostile. Some middle level leaders asserted the presence of competition for power among top leaders, than focusing on the university mission and exerting their concerted effort to the success of the university, which is also seen as one of the reasons for such poor interpersonal relationship to prevail. A dean mentioned, "There was no agreement amongst top leaders and it was very challenging to me, as a dean, which leader to follow as they had different conceptions and beliefs on BPR. While some of them enforce the tool the others in another meeting ridicule the ideas. It was very confusing. This was also observed in my college. It was very challenging to me to lead the team under my leadership and staff" (L6).

All the middle level leaders voiced that such hostile relationship among the top leadership is caused not because of their difference on how to make better the university but because of their personal interests to dominate one another. A dean, L3, talking about his observation of the relationship among leaders said, "The individuals in the top leadership want to go their own way and they want to show their personal influence than working as a team. The team spirit is very poor. There is unnecessary competition for power among the top leaders". Another top leader, L15, also mentioned that the interrelationship is not good and if it happened, it is superficial that does not reflect the reality. He said, "...interpersonal relationship among leaders and staff may look positive superficially. However, other indicators, such as lack of consensus, commitment, etc. in implementing the innovation show mistrust and lack of authority." One of the reasons for such relationship between the top and middle level leaders as reflected by some of the middle level leaders is because the faculty autonomy is overridden by the top leaders. For instance, one of the middle level leaders said:

The autonomy of the university and the faculty is sometimes overridden. For instance, student intake, launching new programs and admission criteria are sometimes

compromised. There are impositions from outside. Sometimes there are political decisions that compromise the university's rules and regulations. The top leaders usually accept for granted what is coming. Though such practices are opposed by deans, the top leaders order for its implementation and this sometimes becomes source of conflict. (L8)

Another leader also mentioned the presence of “strong familial ties” that hinder leaders to take actions on those staff that do not properly discharge their responsibilities for “taking action on one staff makes it taking actions on many”. Moreover, another leader mentioned the presence of unhealthy grouping (cliques) in the university that dilutes the relationship of the leaders. He mentioned:

People have cliques than grouping themselves according to their disciplines that help them engage in academic discourse. Many of staff are just grouping themselves based on immediate benefits than working together with people with common interest to help the university attain its mission and develop their profession and their professional capacity. (L5)

Another source of conflict that was repeatedly mentioned is lack of transparency and fairness on appointments to different positions in the university. A dean complains about such practices, “Some of the top leaders sometimes are appointed without following the university procedures. The criteria for appointing people to different posts are highly compromised by the top leaders. There is no consistency in appointing people, there could be appointment without notice or they try to use pseudo elections that are often manipulated. Such practices, I believe, have brought antagonism and mistrust between leaders and the staff at all levels.” Even one of the leaders (L16) has gone extreme and expressed the university as ‘jungle’ an analogy he used to explain the context of university filled with ‘lawlessness’ and ‘injustice’. Another leader (L8) also mentioned lack of transparency and indecision problems as sources of conflict. He said, “People who have inappropriate capacity and leadership ability are given place in the leadership and their inability is excused than taking appropriate actions by concerned leaders, and this in turn is weakening the university staff commitment. It also makes staff to develop negative attitudes towards their workplace. In general collegiality, friendship and intellectual engagement did not get proper place in the university”. (L14)

Contrary to the practice in the case university, studies portray that interpersonal relationships among members becomes useful dimension of OC when there is a culture that supports members of organization to create and share their knowledge and skills to each other (Holsapple & Joshi, 2001; Zhu & Engels, 2014). Ahmed (1998) also asserted that when the degree to which staff feel free to discuss and debate issues actively, and the degree to which minority views are expressed readily and listened is high, there will most probably be positive feelings of staff which in turn

enhance the likelihood of implementing innovations. In so doing, however, there should be a space that accepts criticism, expects and accepts conflict and address such issues in a proper way.

Academic leaders were also asked if there are ways to resolve such conflicts. All mentioned that there is no mechanism to resolve such conflicts in the university. One leader, L3, asserted that “There is no systematic way of resolving conflicts rather people try to dictate one another. In my experience, when the top leadership gets in conflict, that may be considered natural to happen, none of these conflicts however have been resolved peacefully by discussion. There are always winners and losers. In most cases, those leaders who came across such experience have either left their positions or the University. There are no ways to see such conflicts contained.” Asked about if there are strategies to resolve conflicts, another leader said, “I have never seen strategy or mechanisms of addressing such conflicts. Those conflicts at different level are not properly handled; even some of the conflicts between the top leaders become personal and barriers to our daily routine”. (L4)

The dominant traits of interpersonal relationship seen in the university as reported by many of interviewee are: staff’s reliance on unfounded information; irrationality and squabbling unlike to the expected qualities of academia; lack of discourse or debate on ideas, and taking hearsays for granted. Studies show that if such problems are left unattended they may hinder the effective implementation of innovations. It is because the way leaders communicate, establish their personal relationship with other leaders and staff, their reactions to critical incidents and organizational crises, the role they play in role modeling, support provision and their implementations of their organizations rules and regulations have a greater impact on the performance of their organizations (Schein, 2004).

In general, leaders agree that interpersonal relationship is determinant in implementation of innovation. They also asserted that such relationship should be collegial and underlined the need for team spirit. They are also of the opinion that conflict is natural to happen but the way they are handled is relevant in the process of implementing such MI. Martins and Terblanche (2003) also stated that to enhance open communication among individuals, teams and departments, “teaching personnel that disagreement is acceptable, since it offers the opportunity to expose paradoxes, conflicts and dilemmas can promote openness in communication”.

#### **5.4 Degree of risk taking behavior and flexibility**

The lack of risk taking behavior and flexibility in the implementation process coupled with poor innovative capacity is related to poor performance in implementation or as many of the interviewees agreed “failure in the full scale implementation of the MI”. Some of the interviewees affirm that the university context does not allow deviations or irregularities. As L1

mentioned, "...the culture is very oppressive that forces to propagate ideas that the top university leaders need. It does not entertain differences in ideas". Another leader, who had considerable experience in other public sectors prior to joining HEI compared the university context with what he experienced before and expressed the case university context as very bureaucratic and commented, "Even from my experience in other public sectors, I found the university very resistant. It does not appreciate new things. My expectation was different before I joined the university. Though I had the impression that the university is open to innovations, I witnessed that it actually is very bureaucratic". (L9)

All the academic leaders interviewed are in agreement that the university lacks flexible system to entertain differences. Some of the reasons for lack of risk taking behavior on the part of leaders and system inflexibility were attributed to lack of open-mindedness on the part of the top leaders and fear of deviations for all the MIs are coming from the top. When talking about this, a dean commented, "When people reflect ideas different from what the top leaders are telling, the leaders get frustrated and consider it as barrier for their implementation; I think this may be related to limitation to convince others or lack of flexibility as the MI came from the top". (L7)

Another dean echoed the above view and said, "When some staff reflect the limitation the tool has in implementing it in HE, the reaction of the top leaders was vehemently negative than trying to show the staff both benefits and limitations and allow the staff to work on the limitations. I was compelled to accept the direction coming from the top and I was doing same while disseminating it to my faculty staff." L2 further mentioned, "There were no efforts to address differences. The approach was rigid and the instruction that we were getting from the top was 'you must do it'". However, one of the top leaders, L16, has different perspective on the innovation capacity of the university and talks on what he believes are the barriers. He expressed: "The University has had immense capacity of innovation and creativity. However, the university followed dominantly formalized system during the implementations of BPR. There was little room to entertain irregularities and deviations." Another leader echoed this and says while the MI was implemented, the rules and regulations were not changed or made to fit the new system and there was no incentive that encourages innovativeness. He said:

The University was using the old guidelines, and rules and regulations, which do not fit to implement BPR. As the old saying goes "One should not put new wine in old bottles". In the absence of any incentive for creativity and innovation, leaders and staff don't take risks. The system was not responsive. (L15)

Others also related the problem with "lack of system level change" while BPR requires so. L15 further commented:

There were attempts to bring a paradigm shift in competence-oriented curricula, student-centered teaching-learning practices and academic administration. We created new values such as course system that gives substantial authority to the professor. We also tried to train staff (program managers) so that resource persons are available in each academic unit -empowerment. However, there was not enough and effective communication. One should also see the institution as a whole for system level changes. Legitimizing some of the values was dragging as the legislation was not changed. (L15)

Another dean, L7, supports the above view and said, “Most of the time, the university is trying to use the old way of doing things than easily adopting new bylaws or regulations. I observe clash during implementation as the new tool is guided by the old rules. There was no much effort to align the old with new way of doing things”. Studies in OC portray that unless the existing OC, i.e. the held beliefs and assumptions of employees, is made in alignment with the values of innovation introduced; it is very challenging for any organization to successfully implement such innovations (Obendhain & Johnson, 2004).

Talking about the university’s innovation capacity, a dean, L10, commented: “All of the changes are from the MoE; I have never seen any management tool or change idea emerging from within the university. This by itself shows how the university has a stubborn system for innovation practice”. Yet, another leader appreciated the openness of the university to introduce such innovation tools despite coming from the top. L6 said, “The positive thing in the university is it is open to innovations. Though all the MIs we are practicing so far have come from outside, the university is open to accept the tools coming from the top.” The interviewees agreed that there is absence of a supportive environment for innovation practices and lack of risk taking behavior and flexibility in implementation despite some of the leaders considered accepting all MIs coming from the government by the university positively. Some of the reasons mentioned for lack of flexibility and risk taking behavior are lack of system level approach such as alignment of legislation with the new practice. Some of the interviewees also mentioned lack of open discussion, top leaders’ one way approach (top down) and source of the innovation (top down) as a challenge for the university to nurture risk taking and flexible culture. In this regard, Zhu and Engels (2014, p.153), asserting close link of OC to educational innovations, found out that open and supportive OC with clear goals, collaborative spirit and shared vision are pertinent for the implementation of innovations in HE.

### **5.5 Degree of agreement on mission, vision and core values**

In any organization, it is believed that there has to be some degree of agreement among leaders and the staff on mission, vision and core values. In order to enhance such understanding thereby effectively lead the organization, OC researchers assert that there should be synergy between the



mission, vision and core values at corporate level with the units, in this case at university and faculty or college or department levels respectively. On the other hand, if there is no common agreement and understanding on mission, vision and core values among leaders and staff, and synergy between university and faculty, culture will have counterproductive effect on the implementation of innovations in university or in any organization (Abbasi & Zamani-Miandashti, 2013; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Teirney, 1988; Zhu & Engels, 2014).

### **5.5.1 Agreement on mission and vision**

Academic leaders need to have defined and clear vision and mission of their organization which should be shared by their staff. Leaders have also a responsibility to support their staff in translating the vision and mission of their organizations into their day-to-day activities (Abbasi & Zamani-Miandashti, 2013, p.515). In this study, however, academic leaders have mixed views on understanding of the mission, vision and core values of the university. Though hesitant on the effective translation of the mission and vision of the university into practice, academic leaders reported that they know the mission and vision. However, they have mixed views whether the mission and vision are well known and understood by staff. A dean mentioned that he and his faculty staff are well aware of the mission and vision of the university. He also mentioned that though there might be understanding on the part of academic leaders and staff, the mission and vision are not taken seriously by staff and efforts made to do so are insufficient. He said:

Many people do not take the vision of the university seriously. They make fun of it. They believe that the vision is too ambitious and will never be achieved unless there is change on the way the university is doing things. I don't think we will be "a premier research university in Africa by 2025". In fact, I don't also see any mechanism to make sure whether my efforts as a dean are taking me to that direction. (L4)

Another top leader, however, disagrees with the above view that he does not believe majority of staff understand the mission and vision of the university. He stated:

I don't think all staffs know and understand the mission, vision and values of the university. Recently, there were some attempts to communicate the mission, and vision. However, engagement is not mission/vision-oriented. Even the top leaders are spending more than 90% of their time on routines/student services (food, dormitory, health). (L15)

Asked about why majority of the staff do not have sufficient understanding of the mission and vision, a dean mentioned:

The leadership does not allow it to happen. The way of doing it is just confined to the rare annual or semi-annual meetings. They remind us the vision and mission of the university, and there is no any strategic approach to really embed the university's mission and vision into our daily activities. (L3)

Despite such differences in their views, majority of the academic leaders agree that the vision and mission are known by majority of staff though there does not seem a common agreement on how to achieve them. Another relevant issue related to mission and vision is the level of agreement with the faculties or units' missions and vision. Academic leaders agree that there is no mechanism to check the synergy between university and faculty values, mission and vision despite some improvements after the implementation of BSC. In this regard, a leader said:

The synergy is very loose. Had it been strong the staff could have good understanding of the core values and mission. There are however some improvements after the introduction of BSC in the university. BSC is serving as a good communication tool between leaders and staff though there are still implementation problems. (L1)

Another top leader supported the loose synergy between mission and vision and said, "In an institution where things are done in disarray, there is rather antagonism between goals and values". (L15)

Agreeing with the above view, another leader complains about the lack of series discussions on such relevant issues in the university. Talking about this, he said, "Though the faculties are told to plan based on the strategic plan of the university, there is no monitoring and evaluation system. There is no discussion on such matters, and if there is, it is just a kind of public meeting that is more of orienting to comply with what the top management thinks. There are no forums where we can debate and convince or be convinced on our plans". (L7)

Taken together, the excerpts suggest that leaders do not seem confident to say the staff understand the mission and vision of the university. Moreover, though some of the interviewees seem to agree on the presence of understanding of the mission and vision among staff and themselves, they are however quite hesitant to affirm whether the mission and vision of the university are appropriately translated into practice.

### **5.5.2 Agreement on core values and its contribution to implementing management innovation**

Several middle level leaders reported that they do not remember the core values of the university, and almost all interviewees are very suspicious of the impact of the core values on implementation of the innovation. It was also learnt that they have gloomy picture on the roles of

core values in implementing MI. All the participants except a dean with whom I had One-on-One interview were unable to remember the core values which are mentioned in the strategic plan of the university (see below table 3). The common response of leaders was “I do not remember the core values”. Below are the list of core values, as indicated in the strategic plan that the university wants to uphold, promote and be guided in fulfilling its mission and achieving its vision.

**Table 3.** Core values<sup>11</sup> of Bahir Dar University

<i>Quality-</i>	University product should be of high quality and the University staffs continuously strive for excellence in their academic and administrative endeavors.
<i>Integrity-</i>	in all our activities we will act with the quality of being honest and with strong moral principles
<i>Transparency-</i>	rules, regulations and decision makings at all levels to be transparent.
<i>Accountability-</i>	University staff performing duties in an accountable manner and taking full responsibility for actions and decisions they take thereof.
<i>Rule of law-</i>	University community believe in rule of law and act accordingly.
<i>Equality-</i>	the University is an equal opportunity employer and teaching institution regardless of gender, status in society, ethnic background or religious affinity. The University management never discriminates among its employees and treats them on merit bases and respects their contributions.
<i>Promote diversity-</i>	Advancement of human and intellectual diversity to enrich the academic community and to overcome the barriers separating individuals, populations, and cultures.

**Source:** The five years strategic plan (2011-2016) of Bahir Dar University (October 2011, p.7)

Asked to mention among the core values of the university above, L1, said “Oh sorry, I do not exactly remember the core values of the university. I think they include community service, engaging in research and be known in Africa.” As can be seen from the leader’s response, what he mentioned are mix of the vision and the mission of the university, and none of them reflect the values indicated in the strategic plan. Similarly another leader said:

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<sup>11</sup> The core values promoted in the university are not consistent across university documents. For instance, while the core values mentioned in the university’s strategic plan are as shown in table 3, the core values listed in the monthly newspaper of the university include: quality, discourse, innovation, integrity, democratic culture, and social responsibility. Moreover, the core values included in the proposed new legislation of the university, which is ready for approval by the university senate, are different from both the university’s strategic plan and the monthly newspaper.

I do not think every staff knows the core values and integrate them with their activities. I myself could not even remember them let alone to inspire or initiate staff using them. So, I do not think the core values have contributed to the implementation of the innovation. I do not also think it is possible to see their impact unless they are known and understood by everyone in the university. (L6)

All academic leaders agree that the core values are there in the strategic plan and were not translated intentionally into practice during the implementation period. One of the members of top leadership in the university mentioned:

The core values are set for formality. The values are not internalized and consequently, they are not observed during execution of institutional business. They are not reflected in terms of behavioural change. During my leadership, none of the core values of the University were intentionally promoted at institutional level. (L15)

Another leader, L6, asked why core values are not known by staff, mentioned, “Putting them in document does not guarantee that all people know and can implement them. They are there to fulfill the requirement of the format. They are not inculcated into everyone's mind and practice.” Another leader who had a chance to participate in developing the core values mentioned:

I was personally involved in developing the core values but the process of developing them was not inclusive and the deliberation was not strong. The top leadership was orienting staff which was not really enough. The core values seem excellent but their impact is not as such significant. It is because we did not do much to translate them into practice. (L9)

All academic leaders were also suspicious of the impact of the core values on the implementation of MI. For instance, a dean commented: “I do not remember them but they are around ten [compare with table 1 above]. The core values are there in the university’s plan..., and I do not see their role in my practice”. (L5)

Another leader, L9, also mentioned that the core values are not well communicated to the staff. Talking about this, he said: “I think the values are 4 or 5 [compare with table 1 above] but I do not exactly remember them. The vision is posted everywhere but the values are not given appropriate attention and I do not think most leaders also remember them let alone to understand and integrate them into their practice. There is gap in making them known to the university community”. Moreover, here below is one of the leaders interesting story of his experience with regard to the efforts made by the university to communicate the core values to its staff. The leader expressed his experience as follows.

The core values seem to be prepared because the strategic plan requires doing so; otherwise, they are not promoted and integrated to our daily activities. I remember there was a visiting team from outside who came to audit the university, and the format that they sent us for evaluation prior to their arrival asks whether there is clarity of the mission and core values of the university by all employees in the university, and whether the university is properly communicating them or not. During this time, the top leadership was in a hurry to post the core values at every corner of the university's buildings as the format asks whether the core values are posted in visible place to the university community or not. We [middle level leaders] were also told to make ourselves acquainted with them in case the visitors ask us in their random interview. We were also ordered to pass information to everyone at our disposal to let them know the core values. This was entirely for the sake of report. There was no such effort done before the visit of the external visitors. It is this time that many of us had read the core values. To my knowledge, there are no subsequent documents that explain what each core values mean, how they can be integrated into our daily activities and how we can really monitor and evaluate our practice. In many instances, the communications is limited to directives from top to down and reports from bottom up. It is very challenging to get heard by the top leadership and they do not usually share our (middle level leaders) concerns and freely discuss the values to integrate them into our practice. When I see the link with faculty values, some of the faculties may 'cut and paste' the core values from the strategic document of the university but I do not usually see their impact in practice. It looks like complying with the existing plans and report formats. The same is true with the mission and vision. We just 'copy and paste' the universities mission and vision though we are supposed to customize to our faculty context and develop our own in line with the university's mission, and vision.

As I told you the core values are there in the strategic plan. They include quality and others which I do not exactly remember all. These core values are only on paper. If they were seriously taken core values, the university community should integrate them into its daily activities. To do so, there should be mechanism to make the staff know them and a critical evaluation of reports of each faculty in the university; however, whether these core values are included or not is not checked. When I was submitting my faculty report, the top leadership has never commented it. When I send my plan, no one checks it whether these core values are really integrated well or not. To me, they do not seem considered as essential elements of the process. So, if they are not taken seriously then it is unlikely to see them intentionally practiced.

This quotation is interesting in a number of ways as it reflects views of the majority of academic leaders in this study. Though the core values are supposed to get focus so that they can contribute to effective implementation of MI by easily mobilizing employees, top leaders were communicating the core values to middle level leaders and staff just for compliance. Unlike such practice in the case university, a top-down approach to OC change is feasible if the focus is on

behavioral norms and not on assumptions and core values or collectively deepest layers of OC. According to De Witte and van Muijenp (2010, p.500), “top-down approaches generally result in overt compliance and not covert acceptance, and might be difficult to sustain”. These scholars recommend use of a combination of top-down initiation with participative feedback sessions with the organizational members to integrate the core values through dialogue. Otherwise, if only top-down approach is to be followed to integrate core values and assumptions it results in overt commitment and covert acceptance (De Witte & van Muijenp, 2010). The quote also shows the absence of mechanisms to show whether the faculty values are in alignment with the core values of the university. Though it is true that the faculties may have their own peculiarities, there was no indication of the top leaders checking if the core values are integrated into university practice.

In general, it can be said that almost all academic leaders hardly remember the core values of the university and are very uncertain about how to respond to questions about its role in implementing MI or its impact to their university. One of the deans mentioned the role of the core values as “simply theoretical”. Others also mentioned that though the core values are redesigned in a way to reflect the change process, they are not communicated well and are not known. In fact, little effort was made to make them known by concerned bodies in the top leadership. It is reported that despite they appear in the strategic document and university website much work was not done to translate them into practice. All these suggest that there is a serious underestimation of the role of core values.

Previous studies also show that many organizations pay “lip service” to the need of an OC that supports innovation practices. Theoretically many of them believe that such culture is needed to nurture and properly implement innovations, except very few however fail to translate it into practice or succeed in doing it (Ahmed, 1998). This is similar to the case university. Riter (1994) found out that there were disparities between what the action and rhetoric experiences in implementing change among academic leaders. Riter further reported that “top and senior middle managers did not behave according to the cultural values, rendering the program less valuable, something that was forced upon employees with top managers remaining outside, trying to control rather than being in it themselves” (p.92). Similarly, while most leaders in the case university seem to agree that BPR has good principles and ideas that may be relevant to the university, the values which are essential to make it happen are not properly translated into practice. Related to this, Ahmed (1998) in his analysis argued that two dimensions should exist together for values to deeply influence organizational practice. The dimensions are: intensity-amount of approval/disapproval attached to an expectation, and crystallization-prevalence with which the values are shared. According to Ahmed (1998), some values may be held by many people with no intensity. That is, there is a possibility where everyone in the organizations know what the leaders need without giving them strong approval or disapproval to the values advocated. On the other hand, some staff may have approval to some values and share them while others are against to those held and shared values. It is said that for values to have strong

influence and facilitate innovation practice in organizations both intensity and crystallization should be met. However, in the case university as can be understood from the academic leaders' accounts, neither intensity nor crystallization has been met.

### **5.5.3 Cultural clashes: existing versus new**

All the leaders agree that the desired culture to implement the innovation is missing. Academic leaders reported that while the nature of the MI implemented demands radical thinking or transformation, cultural change is gradual and the efforts made in the case university to reconcile with the existing culture is very low.

When implementing organization-wide change, as in the case university, checking whether the existing OC is in alignment with the required, often new, is largely imperative (Haneberg, 2009). According to this scholar "If the culture is nimble (in the habit of being realigned), change will be more fluid and effective" (Haneberg, 2009, p.3) and hence leaders are supposed to play a key role in aligning the existing culture with desired culture to facilitate smooth implementation of MI. For instance, they can make change plans include strategies on how to address current and desired cultural elements. A common view amongst interviewees, however, is that the existing culture has been a barrier for implementation of the MI in the case university.

Talking about this issue an interviewee, L13, said, "we are still facing problem because while BPR demands fundamental transformation of existing culture, culture by its nature needs time to change; so, it was very challenging in my faculty to modify or change the old habits in short period of time". This view was echoed by another leader, L7, who says "When I think of myself as a dean during the implementation process, I have been trapped between two different and contrasting designs- old and new. While the old was unchanged, the new tool (BPR) needed new way of thinking and practice."

On the other hand, whilst minority mentioned that BPR could have some benefit if properly implemented, majority of them agree to the idea that it does not seem to fit to HEIs context as it is challenging if not impossible to bring fundamental changes similar to business or other public sectors.

In line with this, a dean expressed:

BPR required fundamental transformation in thinking and actions; this is very challenging especially in universities where people have their own ideas and often need freedom for their work. It was however seen as an easy task by the top leaders and they just implemented it in a very short period of time without testing it in a small

scale. This has brought significant resistance from staff and it was difficult for many to catch up with the new demands. (L7)

Such views which were repeatedly mentioned by majority of the academic leaders raise intriguing question regarding the nature of BPR and its relation to the context of HE. What clashes are there between existing culture and the demands of the innovation? How were leaders reacting to the daily challenges faced by staff in their effort to implement the innovation? Was the staff in a position to align themselves with the new demands of the innovation? Was there discontinuity, in Birnbaum's (2000) expression, in use of the innovation for it has been introduced into HEIs from non-academic sector? Unless such questions are carefully garnered and aligned to fit to the new requirements, they may cause discomfort on employees as they demand them to behave and act in a way different from what they are used to accomplish their activities. To minimize or if possible avoid such cultural clashes, it is advised to make a long term plan before implementing the MI. In the case university's BPR design (2007/8), it stressed the need to consider culture as an essential element. This document justifies the need for radical change and characterizes the university's culture as "static and toxic". The document also implied the need for the University to radically transform to meet the qualities of a 21<sup>st</sup> century university. It is stated that "The crux of the matter lies in changing the culture of the University- the way we do things here and the lurking values and assumptions beneath our practice" (BDU, 2007/8, p.3). Despite such criticisms on the culture of the university in the document and presence of solid literature that suggest the need for realigning culture and roles in processes of implementation to fit a new organizational reality by leaders (Haneberg, 2009, p. 1), it has been reported by majority of leaders that the case university did not take appropriate measures to modify or change its culture to fit to the demands of the innovation.

When asked about the sources of such cultural conflicts observed during implementation of BPR, one of the leaders shared the view of the above leader and related the source of the problem with treatment of universities in similar way with other public sectors. He mentioned, "The government does not really consider the tradition of the university and that is why we see attempts to introduce and implement in universities whatsoever tool is introduced and implemented in other public institutions that may sometimes create conflict with university context" (L11). Another interviewee, L2, also commented: "...people were questioning the relevance of BPR in universities. They were arguing that it only works in industry or business. No sufficient effort was made by academic leaders to convince or challenge their beliefs and such resistances are still creating persistent problems in implementation".

A common view amongst interviewees was that there is cultural clash between the old and the new culture (such as new delivery methods, ways of assessments, reporting, designing curricula, etc.). Middle level leaders also reported that the work done to modify the existing culture was insufficient to make staff align themselves with new ways of thinking and doing. All the



participants agreed the difficulty to live up to the expectation of the underlying principles of BPR in context of university.

As can be seen from the excerpts, though culture is a determinant of innovation practices, not necessarily all cultures support innovation practices for culture could enhance or inhibit success of implementation practices. Hence, there is a need to possess for organizations constructive cultural characteristics that support such practice. In this regard, previous studies cautioned that "...the culture of innovation needs to be matched against the appropriate organizational context. To examine culture in isolation is a mistake, and to simply identify one type of culture and propose it as the panacea to an organization's lack of innovation is to compound that mistake" (Ahmed, 1998, p.31). Riter (1994) also contended that when there is a need to align the existing culture with the new one, academic leaders should not try to impose new behaviors rather they need to work on ideas, values and meanings that a large group of people hold. Seen against this, academic leaders in the case university have failed to do so though there was a need from the outset as indicated in the university's report.

### **5.6 Degree of involvement in decision making**

Except one of the leaders who mentioned his participation in decision making process, particularly in the development of strategic plan, and BPR design, most of the leaders have negative comments that show inadequacy of their participation in decisions in the university.

One of the leaders commented:

As a university, there were attempts to support colleges and faculties in developing their strategies by taking the university strategy as a frame of reference. The faculties and college were also advised to discuss their plan with their staff before sending to us for endorsement. So, in this way I can say the staff were involved in enriching plans in their respective faculties and colleges. (L11)

Nevertheless, almost all other interviewees disagree with the above view and mentioned the inadequacy of participation in decision making. As one interviewee put it:

My involvement was limited and there was task force who are assigned to work on the strategic plan of the university who later introduced the plan to university community in big public meetings that was a kind of orientation. So, I could not say all relevant people were participating. Though there were some attempts to invite staff by E-mail for comment, many of my staff were not interested to do so. (L2)

Another leader echoed the above view and said:

I was not involved in the team that was working on the strategic plan though I was in the post. A group of people were working on it and we were communicated the strategic plan. The strategic plan was not released timely. BPR started in 2008 but the strategy was communicated to us after two years. I participated in a presentation by the team but it was not enough. The top leadership did not take my involvement as an important ingredient to support the implementation process. (L7)

Another leader also corroborated the above views and mentioned that in addition to limited opportunity to directly involve in the university strategic plan development, he mentioned that the discussion made was not open and just nominal limited to informing. He commented:

While the vision, core values and the university strategy in general were developed, the participation was very low. There was a strategic team that has developed the strategy. I was invited to a meeting for discussion but the meeting was not for modifying or openly discussing to improve rather it was just to inform us. I do not think most people share the vision because there was minimal participation and discussion and that is why the vision is considered as too ambitious by many staff. (L10)

Another interviewee who said he had a chance to participate in the development of the strategy particularly on developing the core values mentioned:

Majority staff was not made to discuss the strategy. It was only the committee members who were working on the document. After introducing BPR, there was discussion on a small circle on the core values. Still only the top leadership was discussing and the discussion was not also that much engaging. (L9)

There were some negative comments about the formation of committee itself. Some of the interviewees claim that though such task forces which work on certain activity have university wide influence, such as strategy development and designing of the BPR, the committee who developed the strategy was not representative and the members are not chosen on merit basis. For instance, one of the leaders, L3, commented: "The big gap here is that the establishment of the committee [that developed the strategic plan] does not represent all". Another leader corroborated this view and said:

It is very uncommon in our institutional context for the academia to be part of the institutional decision making as well as the development and improvement of many aspects of the university's mission and vision. The academia is not usually participating in framing institutional missions rather the academia is informed about the various decisions. As a result, the level of staff participation in the institutional

strategy development is highly limited unless a staff is assigned or nominated by the top university leaders. This may tell that top-down policy implementation is common. (L16)

In this regard, there seems to have various problems related to leaders and staff participation in decision making. Another relevant element that facilitates staff participation in decision making in addition to the social constructs discussed above is the presence of a structure that allows staff interaction. Studies show that to make involvement facilitate innovation practices requires both social and structural setups. For instance, if organizations need full participation of staff in decision making, a structure characterized by flexibility and permissive to interaction of staff is essential (Ahmed, 1998). Ahmed further argues that without structure that allows staff interaction, risks of implementing innovation and empowerment, involvement will only produce empty results even in the presence of strong leadership commitment. With regard to the structure in the case university, almost all interviewees agreed that the BPR structure was better in terms of enhancing involvement of staff but they said that it was not fully implemented and is highly compromised by leaders who do not have understanding of the innovation. Some of the interviewees also mentioned that the university is now in state of confusion to which structure (old and new) to follow. The interviewees reported that the university is currently using mix of the old and new that created, in the words of one leader, “structural confusions among all the university community” (L7). Another leader also mentioned presence of limited involvement of staff. He commented:

... lack of mutual understanding on the structure as well as a strong move of the top leaders for implementing these initiative on a top down approach makes it somehow difficult to make all university community participate in the decision making process and initiate them in order to achieve intended institutional as well as faculty level objectives. (L16)

Unlike this experience, some scholars argue that while having a structure that empowers staff is essential, empowerment of staff should be provided with a strong value system that enables staff work their activities in alignment with the core values and goals of the organization (Ahmed, 1998), which in fact this does not seem successful in the case university for the staff and middle level leaders are neither aware of the core values of the university nor are happy of their participation in the decision making process in the university. In general, majority of the leaders agreed that there was lack of adequate debate and reflection before and during the implementation of BPR. Middle level leaders characterized the process by imposition, lack of clarity of strategy, top down approach, lack of feedback as well as lack of understanding of the process due to their limited participation. The presence of such problems also implies low participation of middle level leaders and staff in making decisions.

## **CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **6.1 Summary and Conclusions**

Organizations can be effective in the implementations of innovations if they can understand, create and sustain a culture that supports innovation practices. Doing so is possible because OC that supports innovation could be enhanced through different initiatives if it is understood well.

Organizational studies show that understanding OC is imperative to the study of institutional transformation. Academic leaders have immense value in leading and supporting innovations in HE, and hence, understanding their views would mean contributing to preparing an environment that supports transformation and facilitating effective implementation of innovations.

Using a conceptual framework developed from existing key frameworks of OC theory, this study tried to critically examine academic leaders' views of the role of OC in the implementation of MI (BPR). To do so, this study tried to understand the following research questions.

- How do academic leaders at Bahir Dar University define organizational culture?
- How do academic leaders at Bahir Dar University view the role of organizational culture in implementing management innovation (in this case Business Process Re-engineering)?

To understand these research questions, the study selected BDU, a public university in Ethiopia, as a case. Sixteen academic leaders constituting vice presidents, deans and officers in the university have participated in the study. One-on-One and E-mail interviews, and documents were used to collect data. Relevant documents such as BDU's BPR design and report, and strategic plan of the university were reviewed. The study chose BPR to understand the role of OC on implementation of MI as it has been under implementation since 2007/8. Selected dimension of OC from literature were used to see its role in implementing BPR.

Overall, the following major findings are revealed in the study.

The present study uncovered that academic leaders in the case university have different conceptions of OC. They agreed neither in its definition nor on its components. That is there is no common understanding of what OC is among interviewees in the university. Though all academic leaders unanimously agreed that OC is very decisive for organizational success, including the case university's effort to realize those institutional reforms, they however failed to describe their university culture or the culture that the university advocates. The variations in

conceptualization ranged from very broad that OC is equated to whole “work system” and a small scale representation of the country “a miniature society” to relatively narrow definitions as “values” and “work relationships”.

Such diversities in understanding are neither wrong nor do they show leaders’ inability to understand OC for the concept is clumsy and does not lend itself to a single definition. Taken together, however, these views provide important insights about academic leaders’ understanding of their OC at corporate or institution level. The views have important implications on the actions academic leaders at different levels would take to improve their organizational practice. Literature shows that there is no consistent definition among OC researchers on their use of the term. Nonetheless, the absence of agreed definition of OC at corporate or institutional level might have been serving as a catalyst to the absence of meaningful discussion of OC in the university. Organizational studies on OC at corporate level show that OC should be shared, and leaders and other staff must have some common understanding on what shapes their actions and their institution. As revealed in the study, majority of the academic leaders were found unaware of the role of core values and even most of them fail to remember the university’s core values which are seen as most essential ingredients of OC. Such are indications that OC is neither commonly shared by the academic leaders in the university nor it is given much attention on its role in the implementation of MI.

The study has also revealed that leadership as a dimension of OC has been playing marginal role in the implementation of the MI. Lack of in-depth understanding of the innovation among leaders and staff was one of the reasons for this. Unplanned and untimely change of leaders, lack of open discussion and debate, piecemeal approach of implementation of the various MIs (BPR, BSC and Kaizen), lack of delivering organized or team leadership on the part of the top leadership, insufficient time between preparation and implementation, and lack of proper and rigorous training to challenge the existing beliefs of staff, middle and top leaders were some the reasons mentioned by interviewees for lack of understanding of the MI in the university.

The study also found out that there is low commitment and sense of ownership among leaders and staff in implementing MI. Some of the reasons mentioned for low commitment and sense of ownership of the MI are staff resistance for they feel that it is an imposed innovation, association of the innovation with personal gains than institutional benefits, and imposition by top leaders in the university. The other pertinent issue raised by middle level leaders is the nature and source of the innovations as basis of resistance and mistrust. All leaders agree that the trajectory of all the MIs so far implemented in the university is top-down including BPR despite some attempts to contextualize. Such experiences of the university appeared to be source of lack of sense of ownership by majority of academic leaders. In fact, the negative side of the top-down approach of such innovations became more apparent when most of the leaders reported that they have been implementing the innovation without having deep understanding. Almost all academic leaders

reported that they are not clear on the differences among the MIs which are simultaneously implemented in the university.

It was also found out that there is disagreement or disconnection between middle and top leaders. While the top leaders seem tightly coupled with board and MoE, they seem loosely coupled with middle level leaders and/or with different units in the university. The middle level leaders feel that they are disconnected with top leaders as the latter are not responsive to their concerns. There is clear rift of sense of “we” and “they” between middle and top leaders. Their relationship is characterized by “imposition”, “command” or “dos and don'ts” and “mistrust”.

Another finding related to leadership in this study is academic leaders reporting for conformity. During implementation, report was mainly used for compliance with bureaucratic requirements than using it for improvement and inform the decision making process. Some of the reasons for such practice as reported by academic leaders were lack of feedback or discussion on their plans and reports by concerned bodies from top leadership, imposition and pressure from inside and outside of the university, external focus of top leaders (e.g. strong connection with government bodies which was seen by some leaders as manifestation of top leaders’ grip for power).

Another dimension in the study was interpersonal relationships and handling of conflicts in the implementation process of the innovation. It was reported by academic leaders that there is no team spirit and common understanding on the implementation, between middle and top leaders, and among the top leaders. The result of this study indicated that majority of the middle level leaders’ relationship with top leadership and among the top leaders themselves is hostile. Some of the reasons mentioned for such relationship are: reliance on top-down communication, lack of team spirit and work for common good, inconsistency in appointing or assigning people to different posts in the university, lack of free discussion and debate that led leaders and staff to rely on unfounded information, cliques, and squabbling over intellectual engagement or discourse. The results also show lack of systematic way of resolving conflicts.

The study has also shown that the degree of risk taking behavior and flexibility in the university is very low. Lack of system level approach such as lack of alignment of legislation with the new practice, lack of open discussion, top leaders’ reliance on one way approach in communication (top-down), failure to fully implement the new structure, and source of the innovation (top down) were mentioned as a challenges for the university to nurture risk taking behavior and flexibility.

As mentioned above, the study found out that several middle level leaders do not remember the core values of the university, and almost all were very suspicious of the impacts of the core values on the implementation of the innovation. All academic leaders interviewed have gloomy picture on how to translate the core values into practice. All academic leaders agree that the core values are there in the strategic plan and were not translated intentionally into practice during the

implementation period. The study also revealed academic leaders' uncertainties on the outputs of the innovation and lack of follow up of its implementation.

A common view revealed in the study amongst interviewees is that there is cultural clash between old and desired culture (such as the changes in new delivery methods, ways of assessments, reporting, designing curricula, etc). The study found out that the work done to modify the existing culture was insufficient to align with the desired culture (new ways of thinking and doing). All academic leaders agree that the desired culture to implement the innovation is missing and mentioned difficulty to live up to the expectation of the underlying principles of BPR in university context. Thus, academic leaders underlined that the existing culture has been a barrier for implementation.

With regard to the degree of involvement in decision making, most of the leaders have reflected comments that show inadequacy of their participation in decisions in the university. Majority of the leaders agreed that there was lack of adequate debate and reflection before and during the implementation of BPR. Middle level leaders characterized the process by lack of clarity on strategy, lack of support and feedback, lack of understanding of the process and open discussion, and less involvement in developing university strategic plan. These problems imply low participation of middle level leaders and staff in the process of making decisions.

The study has shown that all academic leaders believe OC has been a barrier than facilitator during implementation of the innovation. All of the academic leaders agree that BPR's full-fledged implementation has failed though there are some residuals that can be seen here and there in the university. Almost all leaders believe that the bold objectives and intentions that were promised at the introduction phase of the innovation were reduced only to fixing problems often through structural modification that is also partly implemented. All leaders agree that OC has been a barrier in the process of implementation of the innovation.

## **6.2 Implications for practice**

The study has shown that OC is not playing a positive role in implementing MI. The results suggest that academic leaders need to assess the culture of their organization. With regard to this, the University needs to adapt an overhaul approach to revitalize OC in implementing MI. To do so, academic leaders must first understand the essence of OC. There should be discussion on what elements of culture should be promoted in the university, and this should be part of the leaders' activities to work and build the desired culture. Efforts should be made to understand the "toxic" cultural practices embodied in teaching and learning, research and community services in the university. There should be participatory leadership that gives an opportunity for its staff to participate in and criticize the university's activities through open discussion. Attempt should be

made to change the attitude of people. Henceforth, the toxic cultural practices should gradually freeze and be replaced by positive cultural elements.

As frequently revealed in the study, OC had been a barrier for the implementation of the innovation. That means the desired culture to implement the tool and the existing culture were not in alignment. For instance, there was quite usual way of doing assessment, delivery, and curricular organization; but after BPR was introduced, all these changes were redesigned and attempt was made to implement in a different way from the traditional practice. These have consequently created strong resistance from the staff for they did not want to leave their long tradition of doing things despite the benefits it would bring to students. Some BPR principles such as the principles of fundamental transformation or radical changes may need reconsideration at university context. That is, a package of readymade MIs which work in some part of the world may not directly work everywhere unless they are contextualized and fully understood by actors involved in the process. Hence, careful study and analysis, and rigorous training that go beyond orientation, as the case university used to do, should be made before introduction of new MIs to a new context, and the results of such studies should be implemented properly. For instance, as it has been mentioned, the university studied to implement BPR and came up with recommendation that the then OC of the university is not compatible to implement the selected innovation (i.e. BPR); however, the recommendations were not attended as shown in the results of this study. Contextual knowledge, selected intervention and piloting may be necessary to try out new ground-breaking MIs before they inundate all organizations or the whole units in an organization as in the case university. The other point is to logically challenge the old belief systems (mindset) which serve as a strong fence to belittle new innovations and as a result throw it away. Doing so entails understanding actors' interpretations in addition to looking into the structure, rules and regulations that govern the interconnected web (Tierney, 1988, p.4).

Unlike the presumption that educational organization, university context, is amenable to change ideas, for it teaches and advocates other organizations to implement change. Such context is, however, extremely resistant to change as shown in this study which makes introduction and implementation of innovations very challenging. Hence, to make such MIs function properly, leaders need to be aware of their existing culture and devise mechanisms to improve and set out new values and inculcate beliefs that the new innovation entails. To change the existing culture to more desirable qualities requires replacing the existing unhealthy elements with healthy assumptions and values. So doing needs to be a priority for leaders in university before or during implementation of MIs. Of course, it is clear that leader/s alone may not change the existing culture. However, they can provide appropriate leadership that make others get involved in designing the desired culture. As it has been mentioned in the results of this study, the MIs so far introduced (such as BPR) demand cultural transformation and hence the university's culture needs to meet this demand. It will be unlikely otherwise to transform universities in all their



aspects unless there is parallel engagement to change and fix or revise the elements of culture that are barrier for innovations.

As it has been seen from the results of the study, the core values are not known by almost all staff and more surprisingly by most of the middle level academic leaders. This calls for organizing continuous cultural seminars at different levels. In fact, before organizing such seminars, it would be fitting to make organizational diagnoses in a wider scale, in addition to the present study, that aims cultural audits at institution level to get the actual picture of the university's current cultural milieu. These cultural seminars should deal with the core values, the mission, vision and strategy of the university. This way of making leaders and employees understand the mission, vision, core values and activities of the organization is not new. For instance, Riter (1994, p.77) found out that such seminars can have various purposes among which include to disseminate top leadership's idea about what is the appropriate at institutional level, and to enable units and staff to try to identify things that need to be done and ways of doing them in order to come close to the core values or corporate culture the organization is striving to attain. Riter analyzed the role of such seminars. In the cultural seminars in the case university, leaders can organize and present the core values, mission and vision of their institutions and their respective units, faculty or department, to their staff and may discuss intriguing questions such as "How can we live up to the core values?", "How will we as a team change our behavior?" and "How can we as individuals act in accordance with these values?" "How can we translate the mission into practice by each unit and individuals?" "What improvements do we need to make on the existing way of doing things?" and many other OC issues. Such seminars need to be carefully planned and evaluated in a way the discussed issues are documented and practically implemented. Particularly, as reported by many of the interviewees in the case university, despite the university staff expresses its complaint or concerns in the rare annual or semiannual meetings, the results of the discussion are not reported and actions are not taken for improvement. Hence, organizing such seminars that specifically discuss on selected dimensions of OC could be a good solution to such problems. It can also be a solution for organizing frequent meetings where staff get opportunity to express their concerns timely and get viable solutions from their immediate leaders than waiting for semiannual or annual meetings with the top leadership. Such practice is timely because the university is becoming bigger and bigger in its population size and branch campuses and hence more complex in its organizational make up where the chances of continuing with the current practice, meeting whole university staff, is almost becoming impractical.

There should be strong engagement of the leadership and the university community at large to create sense of ownership of the university in general and the management tools in particular. Transparent assignment of people to different positions, provision of appropriate guidance and follow up by the top leadership and instituting two way communications could enhance the commitment and sense of ownership of staff and leaders. In creating the favourable conditions in

the university, appointments to different positions in the university needs to be carefully considered. As many of the academic leaders agree, the current practice lacks transparency that partly caused mistrust between staff and leaders. The procedure of appointing academic leaders and the way the University operates needs reconsideration as it was recurrently mentioned by interviewees as one source of disagreement in the university.

As reported by all academic leaders, the role of OC in implementing the MI is very weak. As I have also been the witness during the process, the university has invested a lot of resources (material and finance) to realize the implementation of BPR, and as many of the academic leaders agreed, all such efforts do not bring all the intended targets to effect. Though the university was well aware of the mismatch between the existing and the needed culture to implement BPR, less effort has been made to reconcile the mismatch as reported by academic leaders. As mentioned in the university's BPR final report that justifies the need for BPR introduction to the university, it was explicitly stated that the then existing culture of the university does not enable BPR implementation and needed change (BDU, 2007/8). Many of the leaders also unequivocally voiced that though some of the practices that inhibit the implementation of BPR might be changed in the process for culture takes time to change, all what needs to be done was not set in place before implementation. Considering the leaders views about the pace of implementation in terms of time, one could perhaps argue that there was very less time to make all staff involved to understand the process. Rather than mere awareness training, had concerned bodies focused on giving more time for changing people's attitude and in-depth understanding of the change, the success of the implementation of the innovation might have looked different.

The interviewees also reported the presence of miscommunications and confusions on the part of the top leadership. Many of the academic leaders believe that this is one of the reasons why the majority of the staff are not endorsing the change. It was reported that the implementation is very superficial and has not yet got institutionalized. Although the top leaders report the existence of significant changes at institution level, the middle level leaders on contrary claim that such changes are not happening on the ground as reported.

The rift reported between top and middle level leaders need to be narrowed down. Though acknowledging differences in ideas is quite essential in university context, the sense of "We" needs to dominate the sense of "They" from both sides by allowing middle level leaders to adequately participate in key issues such as during introduction and implementation of MIs from the outset and through strengthening their authority. As reported by the middle level leaders in the case university, failures are associated with individuals and this need to be changed or improved. To do so, instituting transformational leadership where a leader is engaged in creating shared values and vision, encouraging innovation, risky operations, and systemic thinking that inspires staff to learn and act could be considered as an option. It is believed that if leadership is

committed to support the implementation and work on aligning the new demands of the tool in terms of changes in the process and structure, it is possible to use culture as a facilitator than a barrier for implementation. Majority's consensus should be created before trying to implement change tools. As much as academic leaders give attention to government directions, they should also need to properly treat and reconcile the sought gaps between their staff and the government's intention. Depoliticizing change ideas is pertinent at university context. There should be academic debates to convince the staff that the change tools are viable to the university context and are in alignment with HE culture. Studies show that OC is socially constructed –it is created and changed through conversations (Haneberg, 2009). Leaders need to allow conversations to change the culture otherwise culture will not change. Such conversations need to support the desired changes that need to be reinforced in the change. Similarly, Schein (1992) also contended that leaders -through their daily conversations - created and changed culture. He stated, “Organizational cultures are created by leaders, and one of the most decisive functions of leadership made well be the creation, the management, and -if and when that may become necessary – the destruction of culture.” It is through conversations – talk, observed actions, listening, and writing that leaders manage, reinforce and create culture. Leadership is a social act and a leader's greatest tool for shaping culture is workplace communication (Haneberg, 2009, p.3). ). Therefore, leaders need to allow conversations to change the culture otherwise culture will not change. Such conversations need to support the desired changes that need to be reinforced in the change.

Another important implication from the study is that the culture of the University's community is highly influenced by the society as the former is driven by traditional sets of beliefs exercised in the larger society. In the absence of any systematic/strategic attempt to adapt the University system under such context, the OC prevailing in the university might not commensurate with University setting. The culture of the University's community is rather highly influenced by the society as the former is driven by traditional sets of beliefs.

### **6.3 Suggestions for Future Research and Limitations**

#### **6.3.1 Future Research**

In this study, OC at corporate level that is shared was investigated using selected dimensions. However, this study did not see the role of subculture or disciplinary cultures in the university. Are they complimenting or conflicting with the corporate or institutional culture? Are disciplinary or other subcultures in universities supporting innovation practice or not? Further study is needed to see the interaction between those cultural aspects at university and at department level. That is, it will be worthwhile to look into the complexity and uniqueness of a university organization; particularly the basic academic values including academic freedom and commitment to disciplines vis-à-vis the managerial values (as there is strong move by the

government to implement business tools) need closer scrutiny. Seen in broad perspective, as revealed by some of the informants in this study, the influence of the state and society on the university culture is also worth investigating. It is because as some scholars argue the university is a small scale representation of the larger society, and it is quite normal to expect the practices in the society or by the state to impact university practice. It is then worth studying whether such influences are serving as barriers or facilitators of innovation practices in universities.

Another possible area of future research would be widening the scope of this study to include as many leaders as possible in the university to make it more comprehensive. In so doing, use of mixed method research to identify the recurrent dimensions of OC that significantly affect the implementation of MIs might also be worth considering. In addition, this study could further be extended by including all the cycles of the innovation practice, i.e. from initiation phase to institutionalization.

### **6.3.2 Limitations**

One of the limitations of this study emanates from the nature of OC itself. OC is understood differently by different scholars and its dimensions are also as varied as the number of scholars who proposed those dimensions. Thus, the study should be seen as one way of studying OC for there is no outstanding framework in studying culture in HEIs. Second, the study did not include participants outside the university such as the board members, the MoE and other concerned, and it is limited to see the university's interaction with outside environment merely from the views of the academic leaders. Third, the fact that the study has focused only in one university and is single case qualitative case study makes it difficult to make theoretical generalization.

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### **Annex: Guiding Interview Items**

1. What favourable conditions do you think are needed to implement MIs such as BPR in university context? How do you explain your university in terms of those conditions?
2. How was the university responding and addressing to internal and external pressures during implementation of such innovations e.g. BPR?
3. How do you explain your and your staff's readiness to involve in the implementation of MIs? Explain me yours and your staff commitment, and sense of ownership to the MIs so far implemented, e.g. BPR?
4. So far various MIs have been implemented in your university, do you think the implementation is sustainable? Why?
5. What is your understanding of OC in your university context? How do you characterize your university culture?
6. During implementation of MIs (e.g. BPR), what do you think is the role of OC?
7. How do you express the attitude and beliefs of your staff (both academic and administrative) towards the MIs so far implemented? How about their participation in implementation?
8. Can you tell me the core values promoted by your university? Explain me the strength of the values of the university in initiating you and your staff to achieve the intended objectives of your faculty or college or university.
9. Do you think that all staff know and understand the mission, vision and core values of the university and your faculty or college? Do you think that the organizations purpose and values are shared and integrated into daily activities of staff? Why?
10. Would you explain me the innovation capacity of your university in entertaining risk taking behaviour, creativity and innovation in general during implementing those innovations? Was the university following formalized and structured (strict rules and policies) system or was the system open enough to entertain irregularities or deviations and resistances observed from staff?
11. How do you explain the degree of synergy between goals and values of your faculty or college and the university?
12. How do you see the interpersonal relationship among leaders and staff? Is/was there smooth communication between you, your staff and higher officials of the university while implementing those innovations?
13. As an academic leader, during the implementation periods of those innovations, do you make any attempt in organizing and managing OC? What specific recommendations would you suggest to make OC facilitator of implementation of MIs?